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Drinkwater, John
Poems

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POEMS
1908–1919

John Drinkwater

From a drawing by William Rothenstein

1917

Emery Walker ph. sc.

POEMS

1908–1919

By

JOHN DRINKWATER

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

30240

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TO

MY WIFE

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POEMS
1908–1919

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RECIPROCITY

I do not think that skies and meadows are
Moral, or that the fixture of a star
Comes of a quiet spirit, or that trees
Have wisdom in their windless silences.
Yet these are things invested in my mood
With constancy, and peace, and fortitude,
That in my troubled season I can cry
Upon the wide composure of the sky,
And envy fields, and wish that I might be
As little daunted as a star or tree.

THE HOURS

Those hours are best when suddenly
The voices of the world are still,
And in that quiet place is heard
The voice of one small singing bird,
Alone within his quiet tree;

When to one field that crowns a hill,
With but the sky for neighbourhood,
The crowding counties of my brain
Give all their riches, lake and plain,
Cornland and fell and pillared wood;
When in a hill-top acre, bare
For the seed's use, I am aware
Of all the beauty that an age
Of earth has taught my eyes to see;

When Pride and Generosity
The Constant Heart and Evil Rage,
Affection and Desire, and all
The passions of experience
Are no more tabled in my mind,
Learning's idolatry, but find
Particularity of sense
In daily fortitudes that fall
From this or that companion,
Or in an angry gossip's word;

When one man speaks for Every One,
When Music lives in one small bird,
When in a furrowed hill we see
All beauty in epitome —
Those hours are best; for those belong
To the lucidity of song.

A TOWN WINDOW

Beyond my window in the night
Is but a drab inglorious street,
Yet there the frost and clean starlight
As over Warwick woods are sweet.

Under the grey drift of the town
The crocus works among the mould
As eagerly as those that crown
The Warwick spring in flame and gold.

And when the tramway down the hill
Across the cobbles moans and rings,
There is about my window-sill
The tumult of a thousand wings.

MYSTERY

THINK not that mystery has place
In the obscure and veilèd face,
Or when the midnight watches are
Uncompanied of moon or star,
Or where the fields and forests lie
Enfolded from the loving eye
By fogs rebellious to the sun,
Or when the poet's rhymes are spun
From dreams that even in his own
Imagining are half-unknown.

These are not mystery, but mere
Conditions that deny the clear
Reality that lies behind
The weak, unspeculative mind,
Behind contagions of the air
And screens of beauty everywhere,
The brooding and tormented sky,
The hesitation of an eye.

Look rather when the landscapes glow
Through crystal distances as though
The forty shires of England spread
Into one vision harvested,
Or when the moonlit waters lie
In silver cold lucidity;
Those countenances search that bear

Witness to very character,
And listen to the song that weighs
A life's adventure in a phrase —
These are the founts of wonder, these
The plainer miracles to please
The brain that reads the world aright;
Here is the mystery of light.

THE COMMON LOT

When youth and summer-time are gone,
And age puts quiet garlands on,
And in the speculative eye
The fires of emulation die,
But as to-day our time shall be
Trembling upon eternity,
While, still inconstant in debate,
We shall on revelation wait,
And age as youth will daily plan
The sailing of the caravan.

PASSAGE

When you deliberate the page
Of Alexander's pilgrimage,
Or say — "It is three years, or ten,
Since Easter slew Connolly's men,"
Or prudently to judgment come
Of Antony or Absalom,
And think how duly are designed
Case and instruction for the mind,
Remember then that also we,
In a moon's course, are history.

THE WOOD

I WALKED a nut-wood's gloom. And overhead
A pigeon's wing beat on the hidden boughs,
And shrews upon shy tunnelling woke thin
Late winter leaves with trickling sound. Across
My narrow path I saw the carrier ants
Burdened with little pieces of bright straw.
These things I heard and saw, with senses fine
For all the little traffic of the wood,
While everywhere, above me, underfoot,
And haunting every avenue of leaves,
Was mystery, unresting, taciturn.

. . . . . .

And haunting the lucidities of life
That are my daily beauty, moves a theme,
Beating along my undiscovered mind.

HISTORY

Sometimes, when walls and occupation seem
A prison merely, a dark barrier
Between me everywhere
And life, or the larger province of the mind,
As dreams confined,
As the trouble of a dream,
I seek to make again a life long gone,
To be
My mind's approach and consolation,
To give it form's lucidity,
Resilient form, as porcelain pieces thrown
In buried China by a wrist unknown,
Or mirrored brigs upon Fowey sea.

Then to my memory comes nothing great
Of purpose, or debate,
Or perfect end,
Pomp, nor love's rapture, nor heroic hours to
spend —
But most, and strangely, for long and so much
have I seen,
Comes back an afternoon
Of a June
Sunday at Elsfield, that is up on a green
Hill, and there,
Through a little farm parlour door,
A floor

Of red tiles and blue,
And the air
Sweet with the hot June sun cascading through
The vine-leaves under the glass, and a scarlet
fume
Of geranium flower, and soft and yellow bloom
Of musk, and stains of scarlet and yellow glass.

Such are the things remain
Quietly, and for ever, in the brain,
And the things that they choose for history-
making pass.

THE FUGITIVE

Beauty has come to make no longer stay
Than the bright buds of May
In May-time do.

Beauty is with us for one hour, one hour,
Life is so brief a flower;
Thoughts are so few.

Thoughts are so few with mastery to give
Shape to these fugitive
Dear brevities,

That even in its hour beauty is blind,
Because the shallow mind
Not sees, not sees.

And in the mind of man only can be
Alert prosperity
For beauty brief.

So, what can be but little comes to less
Upon the wilderness
Of unbelief.

And beauty that has but an hour to spend
With you for friend,
Goes outcast by.

But know, but know — for all she is outcast —
It is not she at last,
But you that die.

CONSTANCY

The shadows that companion me
From chronicles and poetry
More constant and substantial are
Than these my men familiar,
Who draw with me uncertain breath
A little while this side of death;
For you, my friend, may fail to keep
To-morrow's tryst, so darkly deep
The motions mutable that give
To flesh its brief prerogative,
And in the pleasant hours we make
Together for devotion's sake,
Always the testament I see
That is our twin mortality.
But those from the recorded page
Keep an eternal pilgrimage.
They stedfastly inhabit here
With no mortality to fear,
And my communion with them
Ails not in the mind's stratagem
Against the sudden blow, the date
That once must fall unfortunate.
They fret not nor persuade, and when
These graduates I entertain,
I grieve not that I too must fall
As you, my friend, to funeral,
But rather find example there

That, when my boughs of time are bare,
And nothing more the body's chance
Governs my careful circumstance,
I shall, upon that later birth,
Walk in immortal fields of earth.

SOUTHAMPTON BELLS

I

Long ago some builder thrust
Heavenward in Southampton town
His spire and beamed his bells,
Largely conceiving from the dust
That pinnacle for ringing down
Orisons and Noëls.

In his imagination rang,
Through generations challenging
His peal on simple men,
Who, as the heart within him sang,
In daily townfaring should sing
By year and year again.

II

Now often to their ringing go
The bellmen with lean Time at heel,
Intent on daily cares;
The bells ring high, the bells ring low,
The ringers ring the builder's peal
Of tidings unawares.

And all the bells might well be dumb
For any quickening in the street
Of customary ears;
And so at last proud builders come

With dreams and virtues to defeat
Among the clouding years.

III

Now, waiting on Southampton sea
For exile, through the silver night
I hear Noël! Noël!
Through generations down to me
Your challenge, builder, comes aright,
Bell by obedient bell.

You wake an hour with me; then wide
Though be the lapses of your sleep
You yet shall wake again;
And thus, old builder, on the tide
Of immortality you keep
Your way from brain to brain.

THE NEW MIRACLE

Of old men wrought strange gods for mystery,
  Implored miraculous tokens in the skies,
And lips that most were strange in prophecy
  Were most accounted wise.

The hearthstone's commerce between mate
      and mate,
  Barren of wonder, prospered in content,
And still the hunger of their thought was
      great
  For sweet astonishment.

And so they built them altars of retreat
  Where life's familiar use was overthrown,
And left the shining world about their feet,
  To travel worlds unknown.

. . . . . .

We hunger still. But wonder has come down
  From alien skies upon the midst of us;
The sparkling hedgerow and the clamorous
      town
  Have grown miraculous.

And man from his far travelling returns
  To find yet stranger wisdom than he sought,
Where in the habit of his threshold burns
  Unfathomable thought.

REVERIE

HERE in the unfrequented noon,
In the green hermitage of June,
While overhead a rustling wing
Minds me of birds that do not sing
Until the cooler eve rewakes
The service of melodious brakes,
And thoughts are lonely rangers, here,
In shelter of the primrose year,
I curiously meditate
Our brief and variable state.

I think how many are alive
Who better in the grave would thrive,
If some so long a-sleep might give
Better instruction how to live;
I think what splendours had been said
By darlings now untimely dead
Had death been wise in choice of these,
And made exchange of obsequies.

I think what loss to government
It is that good men are content —
Well knowing that an evil will
Is folly-stricken too, and still
Itself considers only wise
For all rebukes and surgeries —
That evil men should raise their pride

To place and fortune undefied.
I think how daily we beguile
Our brains, that yet a little while
And all our congregated schemes
And our perplexity of dreams,
Shall come to whole and perfect state.
I think, however long the date
Of life may be, at last the sun
Shall pass upon campaigns undone.

I look upon the world and see
A world colonial to me,
Whereof I am the architect,
And principal and intellect,
A world whose shape and savour spring
Out of my lone imagining,
A world whose nature is subdued
For ever to my instant mood,
And only beautiful can be
Because of beauty is in me.
And then I know that every mind
Among the millions of my kind
Makes earth his own particular
And privately created star,
That earth has thus no single state,
Being every man articulate.
Till thought has no horizon then
I try to think how many men
There are to make an earth apart

In symbol of the urgent heart,
For there are forty in my street,
And seven hundred more in Greet,
And families at Luton Hoo,
And there are men in China, too.

And what immensity is this
That is but a parenthesis
Set in a little human thought,
Before the body comes to naught.
There at the bottom of the copse
I see a field of turnip tops,
I see the cropping cattle pass
There in another field, of grass.
And fields and fields, with seven towns,
A river, and a flight of downs,
Steeples for all religious men,
Ten thousand trees, and orchards ten,
A mighty span that curves away
Into blue beauty, and I lay
All this as quartered on a sphere
Hung huge in space, a thing of fear
Vast as the circle of the sky
Completed to the astonished eye;
And then I think that all I see,
Whereof I frame immensity
Globed for amazement, is no more
Than a shire's corner, and that four
Great shires being ten times multiplied

Are small on the Atlantic tide
As an emerald on a silver bowl . . .
And the Atlantic to the whole
Sweep of this tributary star
That is our earth is but . . . and far
Through dreadful space the outmeasured mind
Seeks to conceive the unconfined.

I think of Time. How, when his wing
Composes all our quarrelling
In some green corner where May leaves
Are loud with blackbirds on all eves,
And all the dust that was our bones
Is underneath memorial stones,
Then shall old jealousies, while we
Lie side by side most quietly,
Be but oblivion's fools, and still
When curious pilgrims ask — "What skill
Had these that from oblivion saves?" —
My song shall sing above our graves.

I think how men of gentle mind,
And friendly will, and honest kind,
Deny their nature and appear
Fellows of jealousy and fear;
Having single faith, and natural wit
To measure truth and cherish it,
Yet, strangely, when they build in thought,
Twisting the honesty that wrought

In the straight motion of the heart,
Into its feigning counterpart
That is the brain's betrayal of
The simple purposes of love;
And what yet sorrier decline
Is theirs when, eager to confine
No more within the silent brain
Its habit, thought seeks birth again
In speech, as honesty has done
In thought; then even what had won
From heart to brain fades and is lost
In this pretended pentecost,
This their forlorn captivity
To speech, who have not learnt to be
Lords of the word, nor kept among
The sterner climates of the tongue . . .
So truth is in their hearts, and then
Falls to confusion in the brain,
And, fading through this mid-eclipse,
It perishes upon the lips.

I think how year by year I still
Find working in my dauntless will
Sudden timidities that are
Merely the echo of some far
Forgotten tyrannies that came
To youth's bewilderment and shame;
That yet a magisterial gown,
Being worn by one of no renown

And half a generation less
In years than I, can dispossess
Something my circumspecter mood
Of excellence and quietude,
And if a Bishop speaks to me
I tremble with propriety.

I think how strange it is that he
Who goes most comradely with me
In beauty's worship, takes delight
In shows that to my eager sight
Are shadows and unmanifest,
While beauty's favour and behest
To me in motion are revealed
That is against his vision sealed;
Yet is our hearts' necessity
Not twofold, but a common plea
That chaos come to continence,
Whereto the arch-intelligence
Richly in divers voices makes
Its answer for our several sakes.

I see the disinherited
And long procession of the dead,
Who have in generations gone
Held fugitive dominion
Of this same primrose pasturage
That is my momentary wage.
I see two lovers move along

These shadowed silences of song,
With spring in blossom at their feet
More incommunicably sweet
To their hearts' more magnificence,
Than to the common courts of sense,
Till joy his tardy closure tells
With coming of the curfew bells.
I see the knights of spur and sword
Crossing the little woodland ford,
Riding in ghostly cavalcade
On some unchronicled crusade.
I see the silent hunter go
In cloth of yeoman green, with bow
Strung, and a quiver of grey wings.
I see the little herd who brings
His cattle homeward, while his sire
Makes bivouac in Warwickshire
This night, the liege and loyal man
Of Cavalier or Puritan.
And as they pass, the nameless dead,
Unsung, uncelebrate, and sped
Upon an unremembered hour
As any twelvemonth fallen flower,
I think how strangely yet they live
For all their days were fugitive.

I think how soon we too shall be
A story with our ancestry.

REVERIE

I think what miracle has been
That you whose love among this green
Delightful solitude is still
The stay and substance of my will,
The dear custodian of my song,
My thrifty counsellor and strong,
Should take the time of all time's tide
That was my season, to abide
On earth also; that we should be
Charted across eternity
To one elect and happy day
Of yellow primroses in May.

The clock is calling five o'clock,
And Nonesopretty brings her flock
To fold, and Tom comes back from town
With hose and ribbons worth a crown,
And duly at The Old King's Head
They gather now to daily bread,
And I no more may meditate
Our brief and variable state.

PENANCES

These are my happy penances. To make
Beauty without a covenant; to take
Measure of time only because I know
That in death's market-place I still shall owe
Service to beauty that shall not be done;
To know that beauty's doctrine is begun
And makes a close in sacrifice; to find
In beauty's courts the unappeasable mind.

LAST CONFESSIONAL

For all ill words that I have spoken,
For all clear moods that I have broken,
  For all despite and hasty breath,
  Forgive me, Love, forgive me, Death.

Death, master of the great assize,
Love, falling now to memories,
  You two alone I need to prove,
  Forgive me, Death, forgive me, Love.

For every tenderness undone,
For pride when holiness was none
  But only easy charity,
  O Death, be pardoner to me.

For stubborn thought that would not make
Measure of love's thought for love's sake,
  But kept a sullen difference,
  Take, Love, this laggard penitence.

For cloudy words too vainly spent
To prosper but in argument,
  When truth stood lonely at the gate,
  On your compassion, Death, I wait.

For all the beauty that escaped
This foolish brain, unsung, unshaped,

For wonder that was slow to move,
Forgive me, Death, forgive me, Love.

For love that kept a secret cruse,
For life defeated of its dues,
This latest word of all my breath —
Forgive me, Love, forgive me, Death.

BIRTHRIGHT

Lord Rameses of Egypt sighed
Because a summer evening passed;
And little Ariadne cried
That summer fancy fell at last
To dust; and young Verona died
When beauty's hour was overcast.

Theirs was the bitterness we know
Because the clouds of hawthorn keep
So short a state, and kisses go
To tombs unfathomably deep,
While Rameses and Romeo
And little Ariadne sleep.

ANTAGONISTS

Green shoots, we break the morning earth
  And flourish in the morning's breath;
We leave the agony of birth
  And soon are all midway to death.

While yet the summer of her year
  Brings life her marvels, she can see
Far off the rising dust, and hear
  The footfall of her enemy.

HOLINESS X

If all the carts were painted gay,
  And all the streets swept clean,
And all the children came to play
  By hollyhocks, with green
  Grasses to grow between,

If all the houses looked as though
  Some heart were in their stones,
If all the people that we know
  Were dressed in scarlet gowns,
  With feathers in their crowns,

I think this gaiety would make
  A spiritual land.
I think that holiness would take
  This laughter by the hand,
  Till both should understand.

THE CITY

A SHINING city, one
Happy in snow and sun,
And singing in the rain
A paradisal strain. . . .
Here is a dream to keep,
O Builders, from your sleep.

O foolish Builders, wake,
Take your trowels, take
The poet's dream, and build
The city song has willed,
That every stone may sing
And all your roads may ring
With happy wayfaring.

TO THE DEFILERS

Go, thieves, and take your riches, creep
  To corners out of honest sight;
We shall not be so poor to keep
  One thought of envy or despite.

But know that in sad surety when
  Your sullen will betrays this earth
To sorrows of contagion, then
  Beelzebub renews his birth.

When you defile the pleasant streams
  And the wild bird's abiding-place,
You massacre a million dreams
  And cast your spittle in God's face.

A CHRISTMAS NIGHT

Christ for a dream was given from the dead
To walk one Christmas night on earth again,
Among the snow, among the Christmas bells.
He heard the hymns that are his praise: *Noël*,
And *Christ is Born*, and *Babe of Bethlehem*.
He saw the travelling crowds happy for home,
The gathering and the welcome, and the set
Feast and the gifts, because he once was born,
Because he once was steward of a word.
And so he thought, "The spirit has been kind;
So well the peoples might have fallen from me,
My way of life being difficult and spare.
It is beautiful that a dream in Galilee
Should prosper so. They crucified me once,
And now my name is spoken through the world,
And bells are rung for me and candles burnt.
They might have crucified my dream who used
My body ill; they might have spat on me
Always as in one hour on Golgotha." . . .
And the snow fell, and the last bell was still,
And the poor Christ again was with the dead.

INVOCATION

As pools beneath stone arches take
  Darkly within their deeps again
Shapes of the flowing stone, and make
  Stories anew of passing men,

So let the living thoughts that keep,
  Morning and evening, in their kind,
Eternal change in height and deep,
  Be mirrored in my happy mind.

Beat, world, upon this heart, be loud
  Your marvel chanted in my blood,
Come forth, O sun, through cloud on cloud
  To shine upon my stubborn mood.

Great hills that fold above the sea,
  Ecstatic airs and sparkling skies,
Sing out your words to master me,
  Make me immoderately wise.

IMMORTALITY

I

When other beauty governs other lips,
And snowdrops come to strange and happy springs,
When seas renewed bear yet unbuilded ships,
And alien hearts know all familiar things,
When frosty nights bring comrades to enjoy
Sweet hours at hearths where we no longer sit,
When Liverpool is one with dusty Troy,
And London famed as Attica for wit . . .
How shall it be with you, and you, and you,
How with us all who have gone greatly here
In friendship, making some delight, some true
Song in the dark, some story against fear?
Shall song still walk with love, and life be brave,
And we, who were all these, be but the grave?

II

No; lovers yet shall tell the nightingale
Sometimes a song that we of old time made,
And gossips gathered at the twilight ale
Shall say, "Those two were friends," or, "Unafraid
Of bitter thought were those because they loved
Better than most." And sometimes shall be told

How one, who died in his young beauty, moved,
As Astrophel, those English hearts of old.
And the new seas shall take the new ships home
Telling how yet the Dymock orchards stand,
And you shall walk with Julius at Rome,
And Paul shall be my fellow in the Strand;
There in the midst of all those words shall be
Our names, our ghosts, our immortality.

THE CRAFTSMEN

Confederate hand and eye
Work to the chisel's blade,
Setting the grain aglow
Of porch and sturdy beam —
So the strange gods may ply
Strict arms till we are made
Quick as the gods who know
What builds behind this dream.

SYMBOLS X

I saw history in a poet's song,
In a river-reach and a gallows-hill,
In a bridal bed, and a secret wrong,
In a crown of thorns: in a daffodil.

I imagined measureless time in a day,
And starry space in a waggon-road,
And the treasure of all good harvests lay
In the single seed that the sower sowed.

My garden-wind had driven and havened again
All ships that ever had gone to sea,
And I saw the glory of all dead men
In the shadow that went by the side of me.

SEALED

The doves call down the long arcades of pine,
The screaming swifts are tiring towards their eaves,
And you are very quiet, O lover of mine.

No foot is on your ploughlands now, the song
Fails and is no more heard among your leaves
That wearied not in praise the whole day long.

I have watched with you till this twilight-fall,
The proud companion of your loveliness;
Have you no word for me, no word at all?

The passion of my thought I have given you,
Striving towards your passion, nevertheless,
The clover leaves are deepening to the dew,

And I am still unsatisfied, untaught.
You lie guarded in mystery, you go
Into your night, and leave your lover naught.

Would I were Titan with immeasurable thews
To hold you trembling, lover of mine, and know
To the full the secret savour that you use

Now to my tormenting. I would drain
Your beauty to the last sharp glory of it;
You should work mightily through me, blood
and brain.

Your heart in my heart's mastery should burn,
And you before my swift and arrogant wit
Should be no longer proudly taciturn.

You should bend back astonished at my kiss,
Your wisdom should be armourer to my pride,
And you, subdued, should yet be glad of this.

The joys of great heroic lovers dead
Should seem but market-gossiping beside
The annunciation of our bridal bed.

And now, my lover earth, I am a leaf,
A wave of light, a bird's note, a blade sprung
Towards the oblivion of the sickled sheaf;

A mere mote driven against your royal ease,
A tattered eager traveller among
The myriads beating on your sanctuaries.

I have no strength to crush you to my will,
Your beauty is invulnerably zoned,
Yet I, your undefeated lover still,

Exulting in your sap am clear of shame,
And biding with you patiently am throned
Above the flight of desolation's aim.

You may be mute, bestow no recompense
On all the thriftless leaguers of my soul —
I am at your gates, O lover of mine, and thence

Will I not turn for any scorn you send,
Rebuked, bemused, yet is my purpose whole,
I shall be striving towards you till the end.

A PRAYER

Lord, not for light in darkness do we pray,
Not that the veil be lifted from our eyes,
Nor that the slow ascension of our day
Be otherwise.

Not for a clearer vision of the things
Whereof the fashioning shall make us great,
Not for remission of the peril and stings
Of time and fate.

Not for a fuller knowledge of the end
Whereto we travel, bruised yet unafraid,
Nor that the little healing that we lend
Shall be repaid.

Not these, O Lord. We would not break the bars
Thy wisdom sets about us; we shall climb
Unfettered to the secrets of the stars
In Thy good time.

We do not crave the high perception swift
When to refrain were well, and when fulfil,
Nor yet the understanding strong to sift
The good from ill.

Not these, O Lord. For these Thou hast revealed,
We know the golden season when to reap

The heavy-fruited treasure of the field,
The hour to sleep.

Not these. We know the hemlock from the rose,
The pure from stained, the noble from the base
The tranquil holy light of truth that glows
On Pity's face.

We know the paths wherein our feet should press,
Across our hearts are written Thy decrees,
Yet now, O Lord, be merciful to bless
With more than these.

Grant us the will to fashion as we feel,
Grant us the strength to labour as we know,
Grant us the purpose, ribbed and edged with steel,
To strike the blow.

Knowledge we ask not — knowledge Thou hast lent,
But, Lord, the will — there lies our bitter need,
Give us to build above the deep intent
The deed, the deed.

THE BUILDING

Whence these hods, and bricks of bright red
clay,
And swart men climbing ladders in the night?

Stilled are the clamorous energies of day,
The streets are dumb, and, prodigal of light,
The lamps but shine upon a city of sleep.
A step goes out into the silence; far
Across the quiet roofs the hour is tolled
From ghostly towers; the indifferent earth
may keep
That ragged flotsam shielded from the cold
In earth's good time: not, moving among men,
Shall he compel so fortunate a star.
Pavements I know, forsaken now, are strange,
Alien walks not beautiful, that then,
In the familiar day, are part of all
My breathless pilgrimage, not beautiful, but
dear;
The monotony of sound has suffered change,
The eddies of wanton sound are spent, and clear
To bleak monotonies of silence fall.

And, while the city sleeps, in the central poise
Of quiet, lamps are flaming in the night,
Blown to long tongues by winds that moan
between

The growing walls, and throwing misty light
On swart men bearing bricks of bright red clay
In laden hods; and ever the thin noise
Of trowels deftly fashioning the clean
Long lines that are the shaping of proud thought.
Ghost-like they move between the day and day,
These men whose labour strictly shall be wrought
Into the captive image of a dream.
Their sinews weary not, the plummet falls
To measured use from steadfast hands apace,
And momently the moist and levelled seam
Knits brick to brick and momently the walls
Bestow the wonder of form on formless space.

And whence all these? The hod and plummet-line,
The trowels tapping, and the lamps that shine
In long, dust-heavy beams from wall to wall,
The mortar and the bricks of bright red clay,
Ladder and corded scaffolding, and all
The gear of common traffic — whence are they?
And whence the men who use them?
When he came,
God upon chaos, crying in the name
Of all adventurous vision that the void
Should yield up man, and man, created, rose

Out of the deep, the marvel of all things made,
Then in immortal wonder was destroyed
All worth of trivial knowledge, and the close
Of man's most urgent meditation stayed
Even as his first thought — "Whence am I
sprung?"
What proud ecstatic mystery was pent
In that first act for man's astonishment,
From age to unconfessing age, among
His manifold travel. And in all I see
Of common daily usage is renewed
This primal and ecstatic mystery
Of chaos bidden into many-hued
Wonders of form, life in the void create,
And monstrous silence made articulate.

Not the first word of God upon the deep
Nor the first pulse of life along the day
More marvellous than these new walls that
sweep
Starward, these lines that discipline the clay,
These lamps swung in the wind that send their
light
On swart men climbing ladders in the night.
No trowel-tap but sings anew for men
The rapture of quickening water and continent,
No mortared line but witnesses again
Chaos transfigured into lineament.

THE SOLDIER

The large report of fame I lack,
And shining clasps and crimson scars,
For I have held my bivouac
Alone amid the untroubled stars.

My battle-field has known no dawn
Beclouded by a thousand spears;
I've been no mounting tyrant's pawn
To buy his glory with my tears.

It never seemed a noble thing
Some little leagues of land to gain
From broken men, nor yet to fling
Abroad the thunderbolts of pain.

Yet I have felt the quickening breath
As peril heavy peril kissed —
My weapon was a little faith,
And fear was my antagonist.

Not a brief hour of cannonade,
But many days of bitter strife,
Till God of His great pity laid
Across my brow the leaves of life.

THE FIRES OF GOD

I

Time gathers to my name;
Along the ways wheredown my feet have passed
I see the years with little triumph crowned,
Exulting not for perils dared, downcast
And weary-eyed and desolate for shame
Of having been unstirred of all the sound
Of the deep music of the men that move
Through the world's days in suffering and love.

Poor barren years that brooded over-much
On your own burden, pale and stricken years —
Go down to your oblivion, we part
With no reproach or ceremonial tears.
Henceforth my hands are lifted to the touch
Of hands that labour with me, and my heart
Hereafter to the world's heart shall be set
And its own pain forget.
Time gathers to my name —
Days dead are dark; the days to be, a flame
Of wonder and of promise, and great cries
Of travelling people reach me — I must rise.

II

Was I not man? Could I not rise alone
Above the shifting of the things that be,

Rise to the crest of all the stars and see
The ways of all the world as from a throne?
Was I not man, with proud imperial will
To cancel all the secrets of high heaven?
Should not my sole unbridled purpose fill
All hidden paths with light when once was riven
God's veil by my indomitable will?

So dreamt I, little man of little vision,
Great only in unconsecrated pride;
Man's pity grew from pity to derision,
And still I thought, "Albeit they deride,
Yet is it mine uncharted ways to dare
Unknown to these,
And they shall stumble darkly, unaware
Of solemn mysteries
Whereof the key is mine alone to bear."

So I forgot my God, and I forgot
The holy sweet communion of men,
And moved in desolate places, where are not
Meek hands held out with patient healing when
The hours are heavy with uncharitable pain;
No company but vain
And arrogant thoughts were with me at my side.
And ever to myself I lied.
Saying "Apart from all men thus I go
To know the things that they may never know."

III

Then a great change befell;
Long time I stood
In witless hardihood
With eyes on one sole changeless vision set —
The deep disturbèd fret
Of men who made brief tarrying in hell
On their earth travelling.
It was as though the lives of men should be
Set circle-wise, whereof one little span
Through which all passed was blackened with
the wing
Of perilous evil, bateless misery.
But all beyond, making the whole complete
O'er which the travelling feet
Of every man
Made way or ever he might come to death,
Was odorous with the breath
Of honey-laden flowers, and alive
With sacrificial ministrations sweet
Of man to man, and swift and holy loves,
And large heroic hopes, whereby should thrive
Man's spirit as he moves
From dawn of life to the great dawn of death.

It was as though mine eyes were set alone
Upon that woeful passage of despair,
Until I held that life had never known
Dominion but in this most troubled place

Where many a ruined grace
And many a friendless care
Ran to and fro in sorrowful unrest.
Still in my hand I pressed
Hope's fragile chalice, whence I drew deep draughts
That heartened me that even yet should grow
Out of this dread confusion, as of broken crafts
Driven along ungovernable seas,
Prosperous order, and that I should know
After long vigil all the mysteries
Of human wonder and of human fate.

O fool, O only great
In pride unhallowed, O most blind of heart!
Confusion but more dark confusion bred,
Grief nurtured grief, I cried aloud and said,
"Through trackless ways the soul of man is hurled,
No sign upon the forehead of the skies,
No beacon, and no chart
Are given to him, and the inscrutable world
But mocks his scars and fills his mouth with dust."

And lies bore lies
And lust bore lust,
And the world was heavy with flowerless rods,

And pride outran
The strength of a man
Who had set himself in the place of gods.

IV

Soon was I then to gather bitter shame
Of spirit; I had been most wildly proud —
Yet in my pride had been
Some little courage, formless as a cloud,
Unpiloted save by a vagrant wind,
But still an earnest of the bonds that tame
The legionary hates, of sacred loves that lean
From the high soul of man towards his kind.
And all my grief
Had been for those I watched go to and fro
In uncompassioned woe
Along that little span my unbelief
Had fashioned in my vision as all life.
Now even this so little virtue waned,
For I became caught up into the strife
That I had pitied, and my soul was stained
At last by that most venomous despair,
Self-pity.
I no longer was aware
Of any will to heal the world's unrest,
I suffered as it suffered, and I grew
Troubled in all my daily trafficking,
Not with the large heroic trouble known
By proud adventurous men who would atone

With their own passionate pity for the sting
And anguish of a world of peril and snares,
It was the trouble of a soul in thrall
To mean despairs,
Driven about a waste where neither fall
Of words from lips of love, nor consolation
Of grave eyes comforting, nor ministration
Of hand or heart could pierce the deadly wall
Of self — of self, — I was a living shame —
A broken purpose. I had stood apart
With pride rebellious and defiant heart,
And now my pride had perished in the flame.
I cried for succour as a little child
Might supplicate whose days are undefiled, —
For tutored pride and innocence are one.

To the gloom has won
A gleam of the sun
And into the barren desolate ways
A scent is blown
As of meadows mown
By cooling rivers in clover days.

V

I turned me from that place in humble wise,
And fingers soft were laid upon mine eyes,
And I beheld the fruitful earth, with store
Of odorous treasure, full and golden grain,
Ripe orchard bounty, slender stalks that bore

Their flowered beauty with a meek content,
The prosperous leaves that loved the sun and
rain,
Shy creatures unreproved that came and went
In garrulous joy among the fostering green.
And, over all, the changes of the day
And ordered year their mutable glory laid —
Expectant winter soberly arrayed,
The prudent diligent spring whose eyes have
seen
The beauty of the roses uncreate,
Imperial June, magnificent, elate
Beholding all the ripening loves that stray
Among her blossoms, and the golden time
Of the full ear and bounty of the boughs, —
And the great hills and solemn chanting
seas
And prodigal meadows, answering to the chime
Of God's good year, and bearing on their brows
The glory of processional mysteries
From dawn to dawn, the woven leaves and
light
Of the high noon, the twilight secrecies,
And the inscrutable wonder of the stars
Flung out along the reaches of the night.

And the ancient might
Of the binding bars
Waned as I woke to a new desire

For the choric song
Of exultant, strong
Earth-passionate men with souls of fire.

VI

'T was given me to hear. As I beheld —
With a new wisdom, tranquil, asking not
For mystic revelation — this glory long forgot,
This re-discovered triumph of the earth
In high creative will and beauty's pride
Established beyond the assaulting years,
It came to me, a music that compelled
Surrender of all tributary fears,
Full-throated, fierce, and rhythmic with the wide
Beat of the pilgrim winds and labouring seas,
Sent up from all the harbouring ways of earth
Wherein the travelling feet of men have trod,
Mounting the firmamental silences
And challenging the golden gates of God.

We bear the burden of the years
Clean limbed, clear-hearted, open-browed,
Albeit sacramental tears
Have dimmed our eyes, we know the proud
Content of men who sweep unbowed
Before the legionary fears;
In sorrow we have grown to be
The masters of adversity.

Wise of the storied ages we,
Of perils dared and crosses borne,
Of heroes bound by no decree
Of laws defiled or faiths outworn,
Of poets who have held in scorn
All mean and tyrannous things that be;
We prophesy with lips that sped
The songs of the prophetic dead.

Wise of the brief belovèd span
Of this our glad earth-travelling,
Of beauty's bloom and ordered plan,
Of love and loves compassioning,
Of all the dear delights that spring
From man's communion with man;
We cherish every hour that strays
Adown the cataract of the days.

We see the clear untroubled skies,
We see the summer of the rose
And laugh, nor grieve that clouds will rise
And wax with every wind that blows,
Nor that the blossoming time will close,
For beauty seen of humble eyes
Immortal habitation has
Though beauty's form may pale and pass.

Wise of the great unshapen age,
To which we move with measured tread

All girt with passionate truth to wage
High battle for the word unsaid,
The song unsung, the cause unled,
The freedom that no hope can gauge;
Strong-armed, sure-footed, iron-willed
We sift and weave, we break and build.

Into one hour we gather all
The years gone down, the years unwrought
Upon our ears brave measures fall
Across uncharted spaces brought,
Upon our lips the words are caught
Wherewith the dead the unborn call;
From love to love, from height to height
We press and none may curb our might.

VII

O blessed voices, O compassionate hands,
Calling and healing, O great-hearted brothers!
I come to you. Ring out across the lands
Your benediction, and I too will sing
With you, and haply kindle in another's
Dark desolate hour the flame you stirred in me.
O bountiful earth, in adoration meet
I bow to you; O glory of years to be,
I too will labour to your fashioning.
Go down, go down, unweariable feet,
Together we will march towards the ways
Wherein the marshalled hosts of morning wait

In sleepless watch, with banners wide unfurled
Across the skies in ceremonial state,
To greet the men who lived triumphant days,
And stormed the secret beauty of the world.

CHALLENGE

You fools behind the panes who peer
    At the strong black anger of the sky,
    Come out and feel the storm swing by,
Aye, take its blow on your lips, and hear
    The wind in the branches cry.

No. Leave us to the day's device,
    Draw to your blinds and take your ease,
    Grow peak'd in the face and crook'd in
      the knees;
Your sinews could not pay the price
    When the storm goes through the trees.

TRAVEL TALK

LADYWOOD, 1912. (TO E. DE S.)

To the high hills you took me, where desire,
Daughter of difficult life, forgets her lures,
And hope's eternal tasks no longer tire,
And only peace endures.
Where anxious prayer becomes a worthless thing
Subdued by muted praise,
And asking nought of God and life we bring
The conflict of long days
Into a moment of immortal poise
Among the scars and proud unbuilded spires,
Where, seeking not the triumphs and the joys
So treasured in the world, we kindle fires
That shall not burn to ash, and are content
To read anew the eternal argument.

Nothing of man's intolerance we know
Here, far from man, among the fortressed hills,
Nor of his querulous hopes.
To what may we attain? What matter, so
We feel the unwearied virtue that fulfils
These cloudy crests and rifts and heathered slopes
With life that is and seeks not to attain,
For ever spends nor ever asks again?

To the high hills you took me. And we saw
The everlasting ritual of sky
And earth and the waste places of the air,
And momently the change of changeless law
Was beautiful before us, and the cry
Of the great winds was as a distant prayer
From a massed people, and the choric sound
Of many waters moaning down the long
Veins of the hills was as an undersong;
And in that hour we moved on holy ground.

To the high hills you took me. Far below
Lay pool and tarn locked up in shadowy sleep;
Above we watched the clouds unhasting go
From hidden crest to crest; the neighbour
sheep
Cropped at our side, and swift on darkling wings
The hawks went sailing down the valley wind,
The rock-bird chattered shrilly to its kind;
And all these common things were holy things.

From ghostly Skiddaw came the wind in flight.
By Langdale Pikes to Coniston's broad brow,
From Coniston to proud Helvellyn's height,
The eloquent wind, the wind that even now
Whispers again its story gathered in
For seasons of much traffic in the ways
Where men so straitly spin
The garment of unfathomable days.

To the high hills you took me. And we turned
Our feet again towards the friendly vale,
And passed the banks whereon the bracken
burned
And the last foxglove bells were spent and pale,
Down to a hallowed spot of English land
Where Rotha dreams its way from mere to mere,
Where one with undistracted vision scanned
Life's far horizons, he who sifted clear
Dust from the grain of being, making song
Memorial of simple men and minds
Not bowed to cunning by deliberate wrong,
And conversed with the spirit of the winds,
And knew the guarded secrets that were sealed
In pool and pine, petal and vagrant wing,
Throning the shepherd folding from the field,
Robing anew the daffodils of spring.

We crossed the threshold of his home and stood
Beside his cottage hearth where once was told
The day's adventure drawn from fell and wood,
And wisdom's words and love's were manifold,
Where, in the twilight, gossip poets met
To read again their peers of older time,
And quiet eyes of gracious women set
A bounty to the glamour of the rhyme.

There is a wonder in a simple word
That reinhabits fond and ghostly ways,

And when within the poet's walls we heard
One white with ninety years recall the days
When he upon his mountain paths was seen,
We answered her strange bidding and were made
One with the reverend presence who had been
Steward of kingly charges unbetrayed.

And to the little garden-close we went,
Where he at eventide was wont to pass
To watch the willing day's last sacrament,
And the cool shadows thrown along the grass,
To read again the legends of the flowers,
Lighten with song th' obscure heroic plan,
To contemplate the process of the hours,
And think on that old story which is man.
The lichened apple-boughs that once had spent
Their blossoms at his feet, in twisted age
Yet knew the wind, and the familiar scent
Of heath and fern made sweet his hermitage.
And, moving so beneath his cottage-eaves,
His song upon our lips, his life a star,
A sign, a storied peace among the leaves,
Was he not with us then? He was not far.

To the high hills you took me. We had seen
Much marvellous traffic in the cloudy ways,
Had laughed with the white waters and the green,
Had praised and heard the choric chant of
praise,

Communed anew with the undying dead,
Resung old songs, retold old fabulous things,
And, stripped of pride, had lost the world and led
A world refashioned as unconquered kings.

And the good day was done, and there again
Where in your home of quietness we stood,
Far from the sight and sound of travelling men,
And watched the twilight climb from Lady-wood
Above the pines, above the visible streams,
Beyond the hidden sources of the rills,
Bearing the season of uncharted dreams
Into the silent fastness of the hills.

Peace on the hills, and in the valleys peace;
And Rotha's moaning music sounding clear;
The passing-song of wearied winds that cease,
Moving among the reeds of Rydal Mere;
The distant gloom of boughs that still unscarred
Beside their poet's grave due vigil keep —
With us were these, till night was throned and starred
And bade us to the benison of sleep.

THE VAGABOND

I KNOW the pools where the grayling rise,
I know the trees where the filberts fall,
I know the woods where the red fox lies,
The twisted elms where the brown owls call.
And I've seldom a shilling to call my own,
And there's never a girl I'd marry,
I thank the Lord I'm a rolling stone
With never a care to carry.

I talk to the stars as they come and go
On every night from July to June,
I'm free of the speech of the winds that blow,
And I know what weather will sing what tune.
I sow no seed and I pay no rent,
And I thank no man for his bounties,
But I've a treasure that's never spent,
I'm lord of a dozen counties.

OLD WOMAN IN MAY

"Old woman by the hedgerow
In gown of withered black,
With beads and pins and buttons
And ribbons in your pack —
How many miles do you go?
To Dumbleton and back?"

"To Dumbleton and back, sir,
And round by Cotsall Hill,
I count the miles at morning,
At night I count them still,
A Jill without a Jack, sir,
I travel with a will."

"It's little men are paying
For such as you can do,
You with the grey dust in your hair
And sharp nails in your shoe,
The young folks go a Maying,
But what is May to you?"

"I care not what they pay me
While I can hear the call
Of cattle on the hillside,
And watch the blossoms fall
In a churchyard where maybe
There's company for all."

THE FECKENHAM MEN

The jolly men at Feckenham
Don't count their goods as common men,
Their heads are full of silly dreams
From half-past ten to half-past ten,
They 'll tell you why the stars are bright,
And some sheep black and some sheep white.

The jolly men at Feckenham
Draw wages of the sun and rain,
And count as good as golden coin
The blossoms on the window-pane,
And Lord! they love a sinewy tale
Told over pots of foaming ale.

Now here 's a tale of Feckenham
Told to me by a Feckenham man,
Who, being only eighty years,
Ran always when the red fox ran,
And looked upon the earth with eyes
As quiet as unclouded skies.

These jolly men of Feckenham
One day when summer strode in power
Went down, it seems, among their lands
And saw their bean fields all in flower —
"Wheat-ricks," they said, "be good to see;
What would a rick of blossoms be?"

So straight they brought the sickles out
And worked all day till day was done,
And builded them a good square rick
Of scented bloom beneath the sun.
And was not this I tell to you
A fiery-hearted thing to do?

THE TRAVELLER

When March was master of furrow and fold,
And the skies kept cloudy festival
And the daffodil pods were tipped with gold
And a passion was in the plover's call,
A spare old man went hobbling by
With a broken pipe and a tapping stick,
And he mumbled — "Blossom before I die,
Be quick, you little brown buds, be quick.

"I've weathered the world for a count of
years —
Good old years of shining fire —
And death and the devil bring no fears,
And I've fed the flame of my last desire;
I'm ready to go, but I'd pass the gate
On the edge of the world with an old heart sick
If I missed the blossoms. I may not wait —
The gate is open — be quick, be quick."

IN LADY STREET

All day long the traffic goes
In Lady Street by dingy rows
Of sloven houses, tattered shops —
Fried fish, old clothes and fortune-tellers —
Tall trams on silver-shining rails,
With grinding wheels and swaying tops,
And lorries with their corded bales,
And screeching cars. "Buy, buy!" the
sellers
Of rags and bones and sickening meat
Cry all day long in Lady Street.

And when the sunshine has its way
In Lady Street, then all the grey
Dull desolation grows in state
More dull and grey and desolate,
And the sun is a shamefast thing,
A lord not comely-housed, a god
Seeing what gods must blush to see,
A song where it is ill to sing,
And each gold ray despiteously
Lies like a gold ironic rod.

Yet one grey man in Lady Street
Looks for the sun. He never bent
Life to his will, his travelling feet
Have scaled no cloudy continent,

Nor has the sickle-hand been strong.
He lives in Lady Street; a bed,
Four cobwebbed walls.

But all day long
A time is singing in his head
Of youth in Gloucester lanes. He hears
The wind among the barley-blades,
The tapping of the woodpeckers
On the smooth beeches, thistle-spades
Slicing the sinewy roots; he sees
The hooded filberts in the copse
Beyond the loaded orchard trees,
The netted avenues of hops;
He smells the honeysuckle thrown
Along the hedge. He lives alone,
Alone — yet not alone, for sweet
Are Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

Aye, Gloucester lanes. For down below
The cobwebbed room this grey man plies
A trade, a coloured trade. A show
Of many-coloured merchandise
Is in his shop. Brown filberts there,
And apples red with Gloucester air,
And cauliflowers he keeps, and round
Smooth marrows grown on Gloucester
ground,
Fat cabbages and yellow plums,

And gaudy brave chrysanthemums.
And times a glossy pheasant lies
Among his store, not Tyrian dyes
More rich than are the neck-feathers;
And times a prize of violets,
Or dewy mushrooms satin-skinned
And times an unfamiliar wind
Robbed of its woodland favour stirs
Gay daffodils this grey man sets
Among his treasure.

All day long
In Lady Street the traffic goes
By dingy houses, desolate rows
Of shops that stare like hopeless eyes.
Day long the sellers cry their cries,
The fortune-tellers tell no wrong
Of lives that know not any right,
And drift, that has not even the will
To drift, toils through the day until
The wage of sleep is won at night.
But this grey man heeds not at all
The hell of Lady Street. His stall
Of many-coloured merchandise
He makes a shining paradise,
As all day long chrysanthemums
He sells, and red and yellow plums
And cauliflowers. In that one spot
Of Lady Street the sun is not

Ashamed to shine and send a rare
Shower of colour through the air;
The grey man says the sun is sweet
On Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

ANTHONY CRUNDLE

Here lies the body of
ANTHONY CRUNDLE,
Farmer, of this parish,
Who died in 1849 *at the age of* 82.
"He delighted in music."
R. I. P.
And of
SUSAN,
For fifty-three years his wife,
Who died in 1860, *aged* 86.

Anthony Crundle of Dorrington Wood
Played on a piccolo. Lord was he,
For seventy years, of sheaves that stood
Under the perry and cider tree;
Anthony Crundle, R.I.P.

And because he prospered with sickle and scythe,
With cattle afield and labouring ewe,
Anthony was uncommonly blithe,
And played of a night to himself and Sue;
Anthony Crundle, eighty-two.

The earth to till, and a tune to play,
And Susan for fifty years and three,
And Dorrington Wood at the end of day . . .
May providence do no worse by me;
Anthony Crundle, R.I.P.

"Old man, grey man, good man scavenger,
Bearing is it eighty years upon your crumpled back?
What is it you gather in the frosty weather,
Is there any treasure here to carry in your sack?"

. . . . . .

"I've a million acres and a thousand head of cattle,
And a foaming river where the silver salmon leap;
But I've left fat valleys to dig in sullen alleys
Just because a twisted star rode by me in my sleep.

"I've a brain is dancing to an old forgotten music
Heard when all the world was just a crazy flight of dreams,
And don't you know I scatter in the dirt along the gutter
Seeds that little ladies nursed by Babylonian streams?

"Mad Tom Tatterman, that is how they call me.
Oh, they know so much, so much, all so neatly dressed;

MAD TOM TATTERMAN

I've a tale to tell you — come and listen, will you? —
One as ragged as the twigs that make a magpie's nest.

"Ragged, oh, but very wise. You and this and that man,
All of you are making things that none of you would lack,
And so your eyes grow dusty, and so your limbs grow rusty —
But mad Tom Tatterman puts nothing in his sack.

"Nothing in my sack, sirs, but the Sea of Galilee
Was walked for mad Tom Tatterman, and when I go to sleep
They 'll know that I have driven through the acres of broad heaven
Flocks are whiter than the flocks that all your shepherds keep."

FOR CORIN TO-DAY

Old shepherd in your wattle cote,
I think a thousand years are done
Since first you took your pipe of oat
And piped against the risen sun,
Until his burning lips of gold
Sucked up the drifting scarves of dew
And bade you count your flocks from fold
And set your hurdle stakes anew.

And then as now at noon you'ld take
The shadow of delightful trees,
And with good hands of labour break
Your barley bread with dairy cheese,
And with some lusty shepherd mate
Would wind a simple argument,
And bear at night beyond your gate
A loaded wallet of content.

O Corin of the grizzled eye,
A thousand years upon your down
You've seen the ploughing teams go by
Above the bells of Avon's town;
And while there's any wind to blow
Through frozen February nights,
About your lambing pens will go
The glimmer of your lanthorn lights.

THE CARVER IN STONE

He was a man with wide and patient eyes,
Grey, like the drift of twitch-fires blown in June
That, without fearing, searched if any wrong
Might threaten from your heart. Grey eyes he had
Under a brow was drawn because he knew
So many seasons to so many pass
Of upright service, loyal, unabased
Before the world seducing, and so, barren
Of good words praising and thought that mated his.
He carved in stone. Out of his quiet life
He watched as any faithful seaman charged
With tidings of the myriad faring sea,
And thoughts and premonitions through his mind
Sailing as ships from strange and storied lands
His hungry spirit held, till all they were
Found living witness in the chiselled stone.
Slowly out of the dark confusion, spread
By life's innumerable venturings
Over his brain, he would triumph into the light
Of one clear mood, unblemished of the blind
Legions of errant thought that cried about
His rapt seclusion: as a pearl unsoiled,
Nay, rather washed to lonelier chastity,

In gritty mud. And then would come a bird,
A flower, or the wind moving upon a flower,
A beast at pasture, or a clustered fruit,
A peasant face as were the saints of old,
The leer of custom, or the bow of the moon
Swung in miraculous poise — some stray from
the world
Of things created by the eternal mind
In joy articulate. And his perfect mood
Would dwell about the token of God's mood,
Until in bird or flower or moving wind
Or flock or shepherd or the troops of heaven
It sprang in one fierce moment of desire
To visible form.
Then would his chisel work among the stone,
Persuading it of petal or of limb
Or starry curve, till risen anew there sang
Shape out of chaos, and again the vision
Of one mind single from the world was pressed
Upon the daily custom of the sky
Or field or the body of man.

His people
Had many gods for worship. The tiger-god,
The owl, the dewlapped bull, the running pard,
The camel and the lizard of the slime,
The ram with quivering fleece and fluted horn,
The crested eagle and the doming bat
Were sacred. And the king and his high priests

Decreed a temple, wide on columns huge,
Should top the cornlands to the sky's far line.
They bade the carvers carve along the walls
Images of their gods, each one to carve
As he desired, his choice to name his god. . . .
And many came; and he among them, glad
Of three leagues' travel through the singing air
Of dawn among the boughs yet bare of green,
The eager flight of the spring leading his blood
Into swift lofty channels of the air,
Proud as an eagle riding to the sun. . . .
An eagle, clean of pinion — there 's his choice.

Daylong they worked under the growing roof,
One at his leopard, one the staring ram,
And he winning his eagle from the stone,
Until each man had carved one image out,
Arow beyond the portal of the house.
They stood arow, the company of gods,
Camel and bat, lizard and bull and ram,
The pard and owl, dead figures on the wall,
Figures of habit driven on the stone
By chisels governed by no heat of the brain
But drudges of hands that moved by easy rule.
Proudly recorded mood was none, no thought
Plucked from the dark battalions of the mind
And throned in everlasting sight. But one
God of them all was witness of belief
And large adventure dared. His eagle spread

Wide pinions on a cloudless ground of heaven,
Glad with the heart's high courage of that dawn
Moving upon the ploughlands newly sown,
Dead stone the rest. He looked, and knew
it so.

Then came the king with priests and counsellors
And many chosen of the people, wise
With words weary of custom, and eyes askew
That watched their neighbour face for any news
Of the best way of judgment, till, each sure
None would determine with authority,
All spoke in prudent praise. One liked the owl
Because an owl blinked on the beam of his barn.
One, hoarse with crying gospels in the street,
Praised most the ram, because the common folk
Wore breeches made of ram's wool. One
declared
The tiger pleased him best, — the man who
carved
The tiger-god was halt out of the womb —
A man to praise, being so pitiful.
And one, whose eyes dwelt in a distant void,
With spell and omen pat upon his lips,
And a purse for any crystal prophet ripe,
A zealot of the mist, gazed at the bull —
A lean ill-shapen bull of meagre lines
That scarce the steel had graved upon the
stone —

Saying that here was very mystery
And truth, did men but know. And one there was
Who praised his eagle, but remembering
The lither pinion of the swift, the curve
That liked him better of the mirrored swan.
And they who carved the tiger-god and ram,
The camel and the pard, the owl and bull,
And lizard, listened greedily, and made
Humble denial of their worthiness,
And when the king his royal judgment gave
That all had fashioned well, and bade that each
Re-shape his chosen god along the walls
Till all the temple boasted of their skill,
They bowed themselves in token that as this
Never had carvers been so fortunate.

Only the man with wide and patient eyes
Made no denial, neither bowed his head.
Already while they spoke his thought had gone
Far from his eagle, leaving it for a sign
Loyally wrought of one deep breath of life,
And played about the image of a toad
That crawled among his ivy leaves. A queer
Puff-bellied toad, with eyes that always stared
Sidelong at heaven and saw no heaven there,
Weak-hammed, and with a throttle somehow twisted
Beyond full wholesome draughts of air, and skin

Of wrinkled lips, the only zest or will
The little flashing tongue searching the leaves.
And king and priest, chosen and counsellor,
Babbling out of their thin and jealous brains,
Seemed strangely one; a queer enormous toad
Panting under giant leaves of dark,
Sunk in the loins, peering into the day.
Their judgment wry he counted not for wrong
More than the fabled poison of the toad
Striking at simple wits; how should their thought
Or word in praise or blame come near the peace
That shone in seasonable hours above
The patience of his spirit's husbandry?
They foolish and not seeing, how should he
Spend anger there or fear — great ceremonies
Equal for none save great antagonists?
The grave indifference of his heart before them
Was moved by laughter innocent of hate,
Chastising clean of spite, that moulded them
Into the antic likeness of his toad
Bidding for laughter underneath the leaves.

He bowed not, nor disputed, but he saw
Those ill-created joyless gods, and loathed,
And saw them creeping, creeping round the walls,
Death breeding death, wile witnessing to wile,
And sickened at the dull iniquity

Should be rewarded, and for ever breathe
Contagion on the folk gathered in prayer.
His truth should not be doomed to march
among
This falsehood to the ages. He was called,
And he must labour there; if so the king
Would grant it, where the pillars bore the roof
A galleried way of meditation nursed
Secluded time, with wall of ready stone
In panels for the carver set between
The windows — there his chisel should be
set, —
It was his plea. And the king spoke of him,
Scorning, as one lack-fettle, among all these
Eager to take the riches of renown;
One fearful of the light or knowing nothing
Of light's dimension, a witling who would throw
Honour aside and praise spoken aloud
All men of heart should covet. Let him go
Grubbing out of the sight of these who knew
The worth of substance; there was his proper
trade.

A squat and curious toad indeed. . . . The eyes,
Patient and grey, were dumb as were the lips,
That, fixed and governed, hoarded from them
all
The larger laughter lifting in his heart.
Straightway about his gallery he moved,

Measured the windows and the virgin stone,
Till all was weighed and patterned in his brain.
Then first where most the shadow struck the wall,
Under the sills, and centre of the base,
From floor to sill out of the stone was wooed
Memorial folly, as from the chisel leapt
His chastening laughter searching priest and king —
A huge and wrinkled toad, with legs asplay,
And belly loaded, leering with great eyes
Busily fixed upon the void.
All days
His chisel was the first to ring across
The temple's quiet; and at fall of dusk
Passing among the carvers homeward, they
Would speak of him as mad, or weak against
The challenge of the world, and let him go
Lonely, as was his will, under the night
Of stars or cloud or summer's folded sun,
Through crop and wood and pastureland to sleep.
None took the narrow stair as wondering
How did his chisel prosper in the stone,
Unvisited his labour and forgot.
And times when he would lean out of his height
And watch the gods growing along the walls,
The row of carvers in their linen coats
Took in his vision a virtue that alone

Carving they had not nor the thing they carved.
Knowing the health that flowed about his close
Imagining, the daily quiet won
From process of his clean and supple craft,
Those carvers there, far on the floor below,
Would haply be transfigured in his thought
Into a gallant company of men
Glad of the strict and loyal reckoning
That proved in the just presence of the brain
Each chisel-stroke. How surely would he prosper
In pleasant talk at easy hours with men
So fashioned if it might be — and his eyes
Would pass again to those dead gods that grew
In spreading evil round the temple walls;
And, one dead pressure made, the carvers moved
Along the wall to mould and mould again
The self-same god, their chisels on the stone
Tapping in dull precision as before,
And he would turn, back to his lonely truth.

He carved apace. And first his people's gods,
About the toad, out of their sterile time,
Under his hand thrilled and were recreate.
The bull, the pard, the camel and the ram,
Tiger and owl and bat — all were the signs
Visibly made body on the stone
Of sightless thought adventuring the host

That is mere spirit; these the bloom achieved
By secret labour in the flowing wood
Of rain and air and wind and continent sun. . . .
His tiger, lithe, immobile in the stone,
A swift destruction for a moment leashed,
Sprang crying from the jealous stealth of men
Opposed in cunning watch, with engines hid
Of torment and calamitous desire.
His leopard, swift on lean and paltry limbs,
Was fear in flight before accusing faith.
His bull, with eyes that often in the dusk
Would lift from the sweet meadow grass to watch
Him homeward passing, bore on massy beam
The burden of the patient of the earth.
His camel bore the burden of the damned,
Being gaunt, with eyes aslant along the nose.
He had a friend, who hammered bronze and iron
And cupped the moonstone on a silver ring,
One constant like himself, would come at night
Or bid him as a guest, when they would make
Their poets touch a starrier height, or search
Together with unparsimonious mind
The crowded harbours of mortality.
And there were jests, wholesome as harvest ale
Of homely habit, bred of hearts that dared
Judgment of laughter under the eternal eye:
This frolic wisdom was his carven owl.
His ram was lordship on the lonely hills,

Alert and fleet, content only to know
The wind mightily pouring on his fleece,
With yesterday and all unrisen suns
Poorer than disinherited ghosts. His bat
Was ancient envy made a mockery,
Cowering below the newer eagle carved
Above the arches with wide pinion spread,
His faith's dominion of that happy dawn.

And so he wrought the gods upon the wall,
Living and crying out of his desire,
Out of his patient incorruptible thought,
Wrought them in joy was wages to his faith.
And other than the gods he made. The stalks
Of bluebells heavy with the news of spring,
The vine loaded with plenty of the year,
And swallows, merely tenderness of thought
Bidding the stone to small and fragile flight;
Leaves, the thin relics of autumnal boughs,
Or massed in June. . . .
All from their native pressure bloomed and
sprang
Under his shaping hand into a proud
And governed image of the central man, —
Their moulding, charts of all his travelling.
And all were deftly ordered, duly set
Between the windows, underneath the sills,
And roofward, as a motion rightly planned,
Till on the wall, out of the sullen stone,

A glory blazed, his vision manifest,
His wonder captive. And he was content.

And when the builders and the carvers knew
Their labour done, and high the temple stood
Over the cornlands, king and counsellor
And priest and chosen of the people came
Among a ceremonial multitude
To dedication. And, below the thrones
Where king and archpriest ruled above the throng,
Highest among the ranked artificers
The carvers stood. And when, the temple vowed
To holy use, tribute and choral praise
Given as was ordained, the king looked down
Upon the gathered folk, and bade them see
The comely gods fashioned about the walls,
And keep in honour men whose precious skill
Could so adorn the sessions of their worship,
Gravely the carvers bowed them to the ground.
Only the man with wide and patient eyes
Stood not among them; nor did any come
To count his labour, where he watched alone
Above the coloured throng. He heard, and looked
Again upon his work, and knew it good,
Smiled on his toad, passed down the stair unseen
And sang across the teeming meadows home.

ELIZABETH ANN

This is the tale of Elizabeth Ann,
Who went away with her fancy man.

Ann was a girl who had n't a gown
As fine as the ladies who walk the town.

All day long from seven to six
Ann was polishing candlesticks,

For Bishops and crapulous Millionaires
To buy for their altars or bed-chambers.

And youth in a year and a year will pass,
But there's never an end of polishing brass.

All day long from seven to six —
Seventy thousand candlesticks.

So frail and lewd Elizabeth Ann
Went away with her fancy man.

You Bishops and crapulous Millionaires,
Give her your charity, give her your prayers.

THE COTSWOLD FARMERS

Sometimes the ghosts forgotten go
Along the hill-top way,
And with long scythes of silver mow
Meadows of moonlit hay,
Until the cocks of Cotswold crow
The coming of the day.

There 's Tony Turkletob who died
When he could drink no more,
And Uncle Heritage, the pride
Of eighteen-twenty-four,
And Ebenezer Barleytide,
And others half a score.

They fold in phantom pens, and plough
Furrows without a share,
And one will milk a faery cow,
And one will stare and stare,
And whistle ghostly tunes that now
Are not sung anywhere.

The moon goes down on Oakridge lea,
The other world 's astir,
The Cotswold farmers silently
Go back to sepulchre,
The sleeping watchdogs wake, and see
No ghostly harvester.

A MAN'S DAUGHTER

THERE is an old woman who looks each night
Out of the wood.
She has one tooth, that is n't too white.
She is n't too good.

She came from the north looking for me,
About my jewel.
Her son, she says, is tall as can be;
But, men say, cruel.

My girl went northward, holiday making,
And a queer man spoke
At the woodside once when night was breaking,
And her heart broke.

For ever since she has pined and pined,
A sorry maid;
Her fingers are slack as the wool they wind,
Or her girdle-braid.

So now shall I send her north to wed,
Who here may know
Only the little house of the dead
To ease her woe?

Or keep her for fear of that old woman,
As a bird quick-eyed,
And her tall son who is hardly human,
At the woodside?

She is my babe and my daughter dear,
How well, how well.
Her grief to me is a fourfold fear,
Tongue cannot tell.

And yet I know that far in that wood
Are crumbling bones,
And a mumble mumble of nothing that's good,
In heathen tones.

And I know that frail ghosts flutter and sigh
In brambles there,
And never a bird or beast to cry —
Beware, beware, —

While threading the silent thickets go
Mother and son,
Where scrupulous berries never grow,
And airs are none.

And her deep eyes peer at eventide
Out of the wood,
And her tall son waits by the dark woodside
For maidenhood.

And the little eyes peer, and peer, and peer;
And a word is said.
And some house knows, for many a year,
But years of dread.

THE LIFE OF JOHN HERITAGE

Born in the Cotswolds in eighteen-forty or so,
Bred on a hill-top that seemed the most of the world
Until he travelled the valleys, and found what a wonder
Of leagues from Gloucester lay to Stroud or Ciceter,
John Heritage was a tiler. He split the stone,
After the frosts, and learnt the laying of tiles,
And was famous about the shire. And he was friendly
With Cotswold nature, hearing the hidden rooks
In Golden Vale, and the thin bleat of goats,
And the rattling harness of Trilly's teams at plough,
And Richard Parker's scythe for many years,
As he went upon his tiling; and the great landmarks,
As loops of the Severn seen from Bisley Hill,
Were his familiars, something of his religion.

And he prospered, as men do. His little wage
Yet left a little over his wedded needs,
And here a cottage he bought, and there another,
About the Cotswolds, built of the royallest stone

That's quarried in England, until he could
think of age
With an easy mind; and an acre of land was his
Where at hay-harvest he worked a little from
tiling,
Making his rick maturely or damning the wind
That scattered the swathes beyond his fork's
controlling.
And he trotted ajog to the town on market
Thursdays,
Driving a stout succession of good black
geldings,
That cropped his acre some twenty years
apiece.
And he was an honest neighbour; and so he
grew old,
And five strong sons, grizzled and middle-aged,
Carried him down the hill, and on a stone
The mason cut — "John Heritage, who died,
Fearing the Lord, at the age of seventy-six."

And I know that some of us shatter our hearts
on earth,
With mightier aims than ever John Heritage
knew,
And think such things as never the tiler
thought,
Because of our pride and our eagerness of
mind . . .

But a life complete is a great nobility,
And there's a wisdom biding in Cotswold stone,
While we in our furious intellectual travel
Fall in with strange foot-fellows on the road.

THOMAS YARNTON OF TARLTON

One of those old men fearing no man,
Two hundred broods his eaves have known
Since they cut on a Sapperton churchyard
stone —
"Thomas Yarnton of Tarlton, Yeoman."

At dusk you can hear the yeomen calling
The cattle still to Sapperton stalls,
And still the stroke of the woodman falls
As Thomas of Tarlton heard it falling.

I walked these meadows in seventeen-hundred,
Seed of his loins, a dream that stirred
Beyond the shape of a yeoman's word,
So faint that but unawares he wondered.

And now, from the weeds of his tomb uncomely,
I travel again the tracks he made,
And walks at my side the yeoman shade
Of Thomas Yarnton of Tarlton dumbly.

MRS. WILLOW

Mrs. Thomas Willow seems very glum.
Her life, perhaps, is very lonely and hum-drum,
Digging up potatoes, cleaning out the weeds,
Doing the little for a lone woman's needs.
Who was her husband? How long ago?
What does she wonder? What does she know?
Why does she listen over the wall,
Morning and noon-time and twilight and all,
As though unforgotten were some footfall?

"Good morning, Mrs. Willow." "Good morning, sir,"
Is all the conversation I can get from her.
And her path-stones are white as lilies of the wood,
And she washes this and that till she must be very good.
She sends no letters, and no one calls,
And she does n't go whispering beyond her walls;
Nothing in her garden is secret, I think —
That 's all sun-bright with foxglove and pink,
And she does n't hover round old cupboards and shelves
As old people do who have buried themselves;
She has no late lamps, and she digs all day
And polishes and plants in a common way,

But glum she is, and she listens now and then
For a footfall, a footfall, a footfall again,
And whether it 's hope, or whether it 's dread,
Or a poor old fancy in her head,
I shall never be told; it will never be said.

ROUNDELS OF THE YEAR

I caught the changes of the year
In soft and fragile nets of song,
For you to whom my days belong.

For you to whom each day is dear
Of all the high processional throng,
I caught the changes of the year
In soft and fragile nets of song.

And here some sound of beauty, here
Some note of ancient, ageless wrong
Reshaping as my lips were strong,
I caught the changes of the year
In soft and fragile nets of song,
For you to whom my days belong.

I

The spring is passing through the land
In web of ghostly green arrayed,
And blood is warm in man and maid.

The arches of desire have spanned
The barren ways, the debt is paid,
The spring is passing through the land
In web of ghostly green arrayed.

Sweet scents along the winds are fanned
From shadowy wood and secret glade
Where beauty blossoms unafraid,
  The spring is passing through the land
  In web of ghostly green arrayed
  And blood is warm in man and maid.

II

Proud insolent June with burning lips
Holds riot now from sea to sea,
And shod in sovran gold is she.

To the full flood of reaping slips
The seeding-tide by God's decree,
  Proud insolent June with burning lips
  Holds riot now from sea to sea.

And all the goodly fellowships
Of bird and bloom and beast and tree
Are gallant of her company —
  Proud insolent June with burning lips
  Holds riot now from sea to sea,
  And shod in sovran gold is she.

III

The loaded sheaves are harvested,
The sheep are in the stubbled fold,
The tale of labour crowned is told.

The wizard of the year has spread
A glory over wood and wold,
The loaded sheaves are harvested,
The sheep are in the stubbled fold.

The yellow apples and the red
Bear down the boughs, the hazels hold
No more their fruit in cups of gold.
The loaded sheaves are harvested,
The sheep are in the stubbled fold,
The tale of labour crowned is told.

IV

The year is lapsing into time
Along a deep and songless gloom,
Unchapleted of leaf or bloom.

And mute between the dusk and prime
The diligent earth resets her loom, —
The year is lapsing into time
Along a deep and songless gloom.

While o'er the snows the seasons chime
Their golden hopes to reillume
The brief eclipse about the tomb,
The year is lapsing into time
Along a deep and songless gloom
Unchapleted of leaf or bloom.

V

Not wise as cunning scholars are,
With curious words upon your tongue,
Are you for whom my song is sung.

But you are wise of cloud and star,
And winds and boughs all blossom-hung,
Not wise as cunning scholars are,
With curious words upon your tongue.

Surely, clear child of earth, some far
Dim Dryad-haunted groves among,
Your lips to lips of knowledge clung —
Not wise as cunning scholars are,
With curious words upon your tongue,
Are you for whom my song is sung.

LIEGEWOMAN

You may not wear immortal leaves
  Nor yet go laurelled in your days,
But he believes
  Who loves you with most intimate praise
    That none on earth has ever gone,
    In whom a cleanlier spirit shone.

You may be unremembered when
  Our chronicles are piled in dust:
No matter then —
  None ever bore a lordlier lust
    To know the savour sweet or sour
    Down to the dregs of every hour.

And this your epitaph shall be —
  "Within life's house her eager words
Continually
  Lightened as wings of arrowy birds:
    She was life's house-fellow, she knew
    The passion of him, soul and thew."

LOVERS TO LOVERS

Our love forsworn
Was very love upon a day,
Bitterness now, forlorn,
This tattered love once went as proud a way
As any born.

You well have kept
Your love from all corrupting things,
Your house of love is swept
And bright for use; whatso each season brings
You may accept

In pride. But we?
Our date of love is dead. Our blind
Brief moment was to be
The sum, yet was it signed as yours, and signed
Indelibly.

LOVE'S PERSONALITY

If I had never seen
Thy sweet grave face,
If I had never known
Thy pride as of a queen,
Yet would another's grace
Have led me to her throne.

I should have loved as well
Not loving thee,
My faith had been as strong
Wrought by another spell;
Her love had grown to be
As thine for fire and song.

Yet is our love a thing
Alone, austere,
A new and sacred birth
That we alone could bring
Through flames of faith and fear
To pass upon the earth.

As one who makes a rhyme
Of his fierce thought,
With momentary art
May challenge change and time,
So is the love we wrought
Not greatest, but apart.

Pierrot alone,
And then Pierrette,
And then a story to forget.

Pierrot alone.
Pierrette among the apple boughs
Come down and take a Pierrot's kiss,
The moon is white upon your brows,
Pierrette among the apple boughs,
Your lips are cold, and I would set
A rose upon your lips, Pierrette,
A rosy kiss,
Pierrette, Pierrette.

And then Pierrette.
I've left my apple boughs, Pierrot,
A shadow now is on my face,
But still my lips are cold, and O
No rose is on my lips, Pierrot,
You laugh, and then you pass away
Among the scented leaves of May,
And on my face
The shadows stay.

And then a story to forget.
The petals fall upon the grass,
And I am crying in the dark,

The clouds above the white moon pass —
My tears are falling on the grass;
Pierrot, Pierrot, I heard your vows
And left my blossomed apple boughs,
And sorrows dark
Are on my brows.

RECKONING

I HEARD my love go laughing
  Beyond the bolted door,
I saw my love go riding
  Across the windy moor,
And I would give my love no word
Because of evil tales I heard.

Let fancy men go laughing,
  Let light men ride away,
Bruised corn is not for my mill,
  What's paid I will not pay, —
And so I thought because of this
Gossip that poisoned clasp and kiss.

Four hundred men went riding,
  And he the best of all,
A jolly man for labour,
  A sinewy man and tall;
I watched him go beyond the hill,
And shaped my anger with my will.

At night my love came riding
  Across the dusky moor,
And other two rode with him
  Who knocked my bolted door,
And called me out and bade me see
How quiet a man a man could be.

And now the tales that stung me
  And gave my pride its rule,
Are worth a beggar's broken shoe
  Or the sermon of a fool,
And all I know and all I can
Is, false or true, he was my man.

DERELICT

The cloudy peril of the seas,
The menace of mid-winter days,
May break the scented boughs of ease
And lock the lips of praise,
But every sea its harbour knows,
And every winter wakes to spring,
And every broken song the rose
Shall yet resing.

But comfortable love once spent
May not re-shape its broken trust,
Or find anew the old content,
Dishonoured in the dust;
No port awaits those tattered sails,
No sun rides high above that gloom,
Unchronicled those half-told tales
Shall time entomb.

WED

I MARRIED him on Christmas morn, —
Ah woe betide, ah woe betide,
Folk said I was a comely bride, —
Ah me forlorn.

All braided was my golden hair,
And heavy then, and shining then,
My limbs were sweet to madden men, —
O cunning snare.

My beauty was a thing they say
Of large renown, — O dread renown, —
Its rumour travelled through the town,
Alas the day.

His kisses burn my mouth and brows, —
O burning kiss, O barren kiss, —
My body for his worship is,
And so he vows.

But daily many men draw near
With courtly speech and subtle speech;
I gather from the lips of each
A deadly fear.

As he grows sullen I grow cold,
And whose the blame? Not mine the blame;

Their passions round me as a flame
All fiercely fold.

And oh, to think that he might be
So proudly set, above them set,
If he might but awaken yet
The soul of me.

Will no man seek and seeking find
The soul of me, the soul of me?
Nay, even as they are, so is he,
And all are blind.

On Christmas morning we were wed,
Ah me the morn, the luckless morn;
Now poppies burn along the corn,
Would I were dead.

FORSAKEN

The word is said, and I no more shall know
Aught of the changing story of her days,
Nor any treasure that her lips bestow.

And I, who loving her was wont to praise
All things in love, now reft of music go
With silent step down unfrequented ways.

My soul is like a lonely market-place,
Where late were laughing folk and shining
steeds
And many things of comeliness and grace;

And now between the stones are twisting weeds,
No sound there is, nor any friendly face,
Save for a bedesman telling o'er his beads.

DEFIANCE

O WIDE the way your beauty goes,
For all its feigned indifference,
And every folly's path it knows,
And every humour of pretence.

But I can be as false as are
The rainbow loves which are your days,
And I will gladly go and far,
Content with your immediate praise.

Your lips, the shyer lover's bane,
I take with disputation none,
And am your kinsman in disdain
When all is excellently done.

LOVE IN OCTOBER

The fields, the clouds, the farms and farming
gear,
The drifting kine, the scarlet apple trees . . .
Not of the sun but separate are these,
And individual joys, and very dear;
Yet when the sun is folded, they are here
No more, the drifting skies: the argosies
Of wagoned apples: still societies
Of elms: red cattle on the stubbled year.

So are you not love's whole estate. I owe
In many hearts more dues than I shall pay;
Yet is your heart the spring of all love's light,
And should your love weary of me and go
With all its thriving beams out of my day,
These many loves would founder in that night.

TO THE LOVERS THAT COME AFTER US

Lovers, a little of this your happy time
Give to the thought of us who were as you,
That we, whose dearest passion in your prime
Is but a winter garment, may renew
Our love in yours, our flesh in your desire,
Our tenderness in your discovering kiss,
For we are half the fuel of your fire,
As ours was fed by Marc and Beatrice.
Remember us, and, when you too are dead,
Our prayer with yours shall fall upon love's spring
That all our ghostly loves be comforted
In those yet later lover's love-making;
So shall oblivion bring his dust to spill
On brain and limbs, and we be lovers still.

DERBYSHIRE SONG

Come loving me to Darley Dale
In spring time or sickle time,
And we will make as proud a tale
As lovers in the antique prime
Of Harry or Elizabeth.

With kirtle green and nodding flowers
To deck my hair and little waist,
I 'll be worth a lover's hours. . . .
Come, fellow, thrive, there is no haste
But soon is worn away in death.

Soon shall the blood be tame, and soon
Our bodies lie in Darley Dale,
Unreckoning of jolly June,
With tongues past telling any tale;
My man, come loving me to-day.

I have a wrist is smooth and brown,
I have a shoulder smooth and white,
I have my grace in any gown
By sun or moon or candle-light. . . .
Come Darley way, come Darley way.

X

LOVE'S HOUSE

I

I know not how these men or those may take
Their first glad measure of love's character,
Or whether one should let the summer make
Love's festival, and one the falling year.

I only know that in my prime of days
When my young branches came to blossoming,
You were the sign that loosed my lips in praise,
You were the zeal that governed all my spring.

II

In prudent counsel many gathered near,
Forewarning us of deft and secret snares
That are love's use. We heard them as we hear
The ticking of a clock upon the stairs.

The troops of reason, careful to persuade,
Blackened love's name, but love was more than these,
For we had wills to venture unafraid
The trouble of unnavigable seas.

III

Their word was but a barren seed that lies
Undrawn of the sun's health and undesired,

Because the habit of their hearts was wise,
Because the wisdom of their tongues was tired.

For in the smother of contentious pride,
And in the fear of each tumultuous mood,
Our love has kept serenely fortified
And unusurped one stedfast solitude.

IV

Dark words, and hasty humours of the blood
Have come to us and made no longer stay
Than footprints of a bird upon the mud
That in an hour the tide will take away.

But not March weather over ploughlands blown,
Nor cresses green upon their gravel bed,
Are beautiful with the clean rigour grown
Of quiet thought our love has piloted.

V

I sit before the hearths of many men,
When speech goes gladly, eager to withhold
No word at all, yet when I pass again
The last of words is captive and untold.

We talk together in love's house, and there
No thought but seeks what counsel you may give,

And every secret trouble from its lair
Comes to your hand, no longer fugitive.

VI

I woo the world, with burning will to be
Delighted in all fortune it may find,
And still the strident dogs of jealousy
Go mocking down the tunnels of my mind.

Only for you my contemplation goes
Clean as a god's, undarkened of pretence,
Most happy when your garner overflows,
Achieving in your prosperous diligence.

VII

When from the dusty corners of my brain
Comes limping some ungainly word or deed,
I know not if my dearest friend's disdain
Be durable or brief, spent husk or seed.

But your rebuke and that poor fault of mine
Go straitly outcast, and we close the door,
And I, no promise asking and no sign,
Stand blameless in love's presence as before.

VIII

A beggar in the ditch, I stand and call
My questions out upon the queer parade

Of folk that hurry by, and one and all
Go down the road with never answer made.

I do not question love. I am a lord
High at love's table, and the vigilant king,
Unquestioned, from the hubbub at the board
Leans down to me and tells me everything.

X

COTSWOLD LOVE

Blue skies are over Cotswold
And April snows go by,
The lasses turn their ribbons
For April's in the sky,
And April is the season
When Sabbath girls are dressed,
From Rodboro' to Campden,
In all their silken best.

An ankle is a marvel
When first the buds are brown,
And not a lass but knows it
From Stow to Gloucester town.
And not a girl goes walking
Along the Cotswold lanes
But knows men's eyes in April
Are quicker than their brains.

It's little that it matters,
So long as you're alive,
If you're eighteen in April,
Or rising sixty-five,
When April comes to Amberley
With skies of April blue,
And Cotswold girls are briding
With slyly tilted shoe.

WITH DAFFODILS

I SEND you daffodils, my dear,
For these are emperors of spring,
And in my heart you keep so clear
So delicate an empery,
That none but emperors could be
Ambassadors endowed to bring
My messages of honesty.

My mind makes faring to and fro,
Deft or bewildered, dark or kind,
That not the eye of God may know
Which motion is of true estate
And which a twisted runagate
Of all the farings of my mind,
And which has honesty for mate.

Only my love for you is clean
Of scandal's use, and though, may be,
Far rangers have my passions been, —
Since thus the word of Eden went, —
Yet of the springs of my content,
My very wells of honesty
Are you the only firmament.

FOUNDATIONS

Those lovers old had rare conceits
To make persuasion beautiful,
Or rail upon the pretty fool
Who would not share those wanton sweets
That, guarded, soon are bitterness.

But we, my love, can look on these
Old tournaments of wit, and say
What novices of love were they,
Who loved by seasons and degrees,
And in the rate of more and less.

We will not make of love a stale
For deft and nimble argument,
Nor shall denial and consent
Be processes whereof shall fail
One surety that we possess.

DEAR AND INCOMPARABLE

Dear and incomparable
  Is that love to me
Flowing out of the woodlands,
  Out of the sea;
Out of the firmament breathing
  Between pasture and sky,
For no reward is cherished here
  To reckon by.

It is not of my earning,
  Nor forfeit I can
This love that flows upon
  The poverty of man,
Though faithless and unkind
  I sleep and forget
This love that asks no wage of me
  Waits my waking yet.

Of such is the love, dear,
  That you fold me in,
It knows no governance
  Of virtue or sin;
From nothing of my achieving
  Shall it enrichment take,
And the glooms of my unworthiness
  It will not forsake.

XX

A SABBATH DAY

IN FIVE WATCHES

I. MORNING

(TO M. C.)

You were three men and women two,
And well I loved you, all of you,
  And well we kept the Sabbath day.
The bells called out of Malvern town,
But never bell could call us down
  As we went up the hill away.

Was it a thousand years ago
Or yesterday that men were so
  Zealous of creed and argument?
Here wind is brother to the rain,
And the hills laugh upon the plain,
  And the old brain-gotten feuds are spent.

Bring lusty laughter, lusty jest,
Bring each the song he names the best,
  Bring eager thought and speech that 's keen,
Tell each his tale and tell it out,
The only shame be prudent doubt,
  Bring bodies where the lust is clean.

II. FULL DAY

(TO K. D.)

We moved along the gravelled way
  Between the laurels and the yews,

Some touch of old enchantment lay
About us, some remembered news
Of men who rode among the trees
With burning dreams of Camelot,
Whose names are beauty's litanies,
As Galahad and Launcelot.

We looked along the vaulted gloom
Of boughs unstripped of winter's bane,
As for some pride of scarf and plume
And painted shield and broidered rein,
And through the cloven laurel walls
We searched the darkling pines and pale
Beech-boles and woodbine coronals,
As for the passing of the Grail.

But Launcelot no travel keeps,
For brother Launcelot is dead,
And brother Galahad he sleeps
This long while in his quiet bed,
And we are all the knights that pass
Among the yews and laurels now.
They are but fruit among the grass,
And we but fruit upon the bough.

No coloured blazon meets us here
Of all that courtly company;
Elaine is not, nor Guenevere,
The dream is but of dreams that die.

But yet the purple violet lies
  Beside the golden daffodil,
And women strong of limb and wise
  And fierce of blood are with us still.

And never through the woodland goes
  The Grail of that forgotten quest,
But still about the woodland flows
  The sap of God made manifest
In boughs that labour to their time,
  And birds that gossip secret things,
And eager lips that seek to rhyme
  The latest of a thousand springs.

III. DUSK

(TO E. S. V.)

We come from the laurels and daffodils
  Down to the homestead under the fell,
We've gathered our hunger upon the hills,
  And that is well.

Howbeit to-morrow gives or takes,
  And leads to barren or flowering ways,
We've a linen cloth and wheaten cakes,
  For which be praise.

Here in the valley at lambing-time
  The shepherd folk of their watching tell
While the shadows up to the beacon climb,
  And that is well.

Let be what may when we make an end
Of the laughter and labour of all our days
We've men to friend and women to friend,
For whom be praise.

IV. EVENSONG

(TO B. M.)

Come, let us tell it over,
Each to each by the fireside,
How that earth has been a swift adventure for us,
And the watches of the day as a gay song and a right song,
And now the traveller wind has found a bed,
And the sheep crowd under the thorn.

Good was the day and our travelling,
And now there is evensong to sing.

Night, and along the valleys
Watch the eyes of the homesteads.
The dark hills are very still and still are the stars.
Patiently under the ploughlands the wheat moves and the barley.
The secret hour of love is upon the sky,
And our thought in praise is aflame.

Sing evensong as well we may
For our travel upon this Sabbath day.

Earth, we have known you truly,
Heard your mutable music,
Have been your lovers and felt the savour of you,
And you have quickened in us the blood's fire and the heart's fire.
We have wooed and striven with you and made you ours
By the strength sprung out of your loins.

Lift the latch on its twisted thong,
And an end be made of our evensong.

V. NIGHT

(TO H. S. S.)

The barriers of sleep are crossed
And I alone am yet awake,
Keeping another Pentecost
For that new visitation's sake
Of life descending on the hills
In blackthorn bloom and daffodils.

At peace upon my pillow lain
I celebrate the spirit come
In spring's immutable youth again
Across the lands of Christendom;
I hear in all the choral host
The coming of the Holy Ghost.

The sacrament of bough and blade,
  Of populous folds and building birds
I take, till now an end is made
  Of praise and ceremonial words,
And I too turn myself to keep
The quiet festival of sleep.

March 1913.

A DEDICATION

(TO E. G.)

I

Sometimes youth comes to age and asks a blessing,
Or counsel, or a tale of old estate,
Yet youth will still be curiously guessing
The old man's thought when death is at his gate;
For all their courteous words they are not one,
This youth and age, but civil strangers still,
Age with the best of all his seasons done,
Youth with his face towards the upland hill.
Age looks for rest while youth runs far and wide,
Age talks with death, which is youth's very fear,
Age knows so many comrades who have died,
Youth burns that one companion is so dear.
So, with good will, and in one house, may dwell
These two, and talk, and all be yet to tell.

II

But there are men who, in the time of age,
Sometimes remember all that age forgets:
The early hope, the hardly compassed wage,
The change of corn, and snow, and violets;
They are glad of praise; they know this morning brings

As true a song as any yesterday;
Their labour still is set to many things,
They cry their questions out along the way.
They give as who may gladly take again
Some gift at need; they move with gallant ease
Among all eager companies of men;
And never signed of age are such as these.
They speak with youth, and never speak amiss;
Of such are you; and what is youth but this?

RUPERT BROOKE

(DIED APRIL 23, 1915)

To-day I have talked with old Euripides;
Shakespeare this morning sang for my content
Of chimney-sweepers; through the Carian trees
Comes beating still the nightingales' lament;
The Tabard ales to-day are freshly brewed;
Wordsworth is with me, mounting Loughrigg Fell;
All timeless deaths in Lycid are renewed,
And basils blossom yet for Isabel.

Quick thoughts are these; they do not pass; they gave
Only to death such little, casual things
As are the noteless levies of the grave, —
Sad flesh, weak verse, and idle marketings.
So my mortality for yours complains,
While our immortal fellowship remains.

ON READING FRANCIS LEDWIDGE'S LAST SONGS

At April's end, when blossoms break
To birth upon my apple-tree,
I know the certain year will take
Full harvest of this infancy.

At April's end, when comes the dear
Occasion of your valley tune,
I know your beauty's arc is here,
A little ghostly morning moon.

Yet are these fosterlings of rhyme
As fortunately born to spend
Happy conspiracies with time
As apple flowers at April's end.

IN THE WOODS

I was in the woods to-day,
And the leaves were spinning there,
Rich apparelled in decay, —
In decay more wholly fair
Than in life they ever were.

Gold and rich barbaric red
Freakt with pale and sapless vein,
Spinning, spinning, spun and sped
With a little sob of pain
Back to harbouring earth again.

Long in homely green they shone
Through the summer rains and sun,
Now their humbleness is gone,
Now their little season run,
Pomp and pageantry begun.

Sweet was life, and buoyant breath,
Lovely too; but for a day
Issues from the house of death
Yet more beautiful array:
Hark, a whisper — "Come away."

One by one they spin and fall,
But they fall in regal pride:
Dying, do they hear a call
Rising from an ebbless tide,
And, hearing, are beatified?

LATE SUMMER

Though summer long delayeth
Her blue and golden boon,
Yet now at length she stayeth
Her wings above the noon;
She sets the waters dreaming
To murmurous leafy tones,
The weeded waters gleaming
Above the stepping-stones.

Where fern and ivied willow
Lean o'er the seaward brook,
I read a volume mellow —
A poet's fairy-book;
The seaward brook is narrow,
The hazel spans its pride,
And like a painted arrow
The king-bird keeps the tide.

JANUARY DUSK

Austere and clad in sombre robes of grey,
With hands upfolded and with silent wings,
In unimpassioned mystery the day
Passes; a lonely thrush its requiem sings.

The dust of night is tangled in the boughs
Of leafless lime and lilac, and the pine
Grows blacker, and the star upon the brows
Of sleep is set in heaven for a sign.

Earth's little weary peoples fall on peace
And dream of breaking buds and blossoming,
Of primrose airs, of days of large increase,
And all the coloured retinue of spring.

AT GRAFTON

God laughed when he made Grafton
That 's under Bredon Hill,
A jewel in a jewelled plain.
The seasons work their will
On golden thatch and crumbling stone,
And every soft-lipped breeze
Makes music for the Grafton men
In comfortable trees.

God's beauty over Grafton
Stole into roof and wall,
And hallowed every pavèd path
And every lowly stall,
And to a woven wonder
Conspired with one accord
The labour of the servant,
The labour of the Lord.

And momently to Grafton
Comes in from vale and wold
The sound of sheep unshepherded,
The sound of sheep in fold,
And, blown along the bases
Of lands that set their wide
Frank brows to God, comes chanting
The breath of Bristol tide.

DOMINION

I WENT beneath the sunny sky
When all things bowed to June's desire, —
The pansy with its steadfast eye,
The blue shells on the lupin spire,

The swelling fruit along the boughs,
The grass grown heady in the rain,
Dark roses fitted for the brows
Of queens great kings have sung in vain;

My little cat with tiger bars,
Bright claws all hidden in content;
Swift birds that flashed like darkling stars
Across the cloudy continent;

The wiry-coated fellow curled
Stump-tailed upon the sunny flags;
The bees that sacked a coloured world
Of treasure for their honey-bags.

And all these things seemed very glad,
The sun, the flowers, the birds on wing,
The jolly beasts, the furry-clad
Fat bees, the fruit, and everything.

But gladder than them all was I,
Who, being man, might gather up

The joy of all beneath the sky,
  And add their treasure to my cup,

And travel every shining way,
  And laugh with God in God's delight,
Create a world for every day,
  And store a dream for every night.

THE MIRACLE

Come, sweetheart, listen, for I have a thing
Most wonderful to tell you — news of spring.

Albeit winter still is in the air,
And the earth troubled, and the branches bare,

Yet down the fields to-day I saw her pass —
The spring — her feet went shining through
the grass.

She touched the ragged hedgerows — I have
seen
Her finger-prints, most delicately green;

And she has whispered to the crocus leaves,
And to the garrulous sparrows in the eaves.

Swiftly she passed and shyly, and her fair
Young face was hidden in her cloudy hair.

She would not stay, her season is not yet,
But she has reawakened, and has set

The sap of all the world astir, and rent
Once more the shadows of our discontent.

Triumphant news — a miracle I sing —
The everlasting miracle of spring.

MILLERS DALE

Barefoot we went by Millers Dale
When meadowsweet was golden gloom
And happy love was in the vale
Singing upon the summer bloom
Of gipsy crop and branches laid
Of willows over chanting pools,
Barefoot by Millers Dale we made
Our summer festival of fools.

Folly bright-eyed, and quick, and young
Was there with all his silly plots,
And trotty wagtail stepped among
The delicate forget-me-nots,
And laughter played with us above
The rocky shelves and weeded holes
And we had fellowship to love
The pigeons and the water-voles.

Time soon shall be when we are all
Stiller than ever runs the Wye,
And every bitterness shall fall
To-morrow in obscurity,
And wars be done, and treasons fail,
Yet shall new friends go down to greet
The singing rocks of Millers Dale,
And willow pools and meadowsweet.

WRITTEN AT LUDLOW CASTLE

(IN THE HALL WHERE COMUS WAS FIRST PERFORMED)

WHERE wall and sill and broken window-frame
Are bright with flowers unroofed against the skies,
And nothing but the nesting jackdaws' cries
Breaks the hushed even, once imperial came
The muse that moved transfiguring the name
Of Puritan, and beautiful and wise
The verses fell, forespeaking Paradise,
And poetry set all this hall aflame.

Now silence has come down upon the place
Where life and song so wonderfully went,
And the mole's afoot now where that passion rang,
Yet Comus now first moves his laurelled pace,
For song and life for ever are unspent,
And they are more than ghosts who lived and sang.

WORDSWORTH AT GRASMERE

These hills and waters fostered you
  Abiding in your argument
Until all comely wisdom drew
  About you, and the years were spent.

Now over hill and water stays
  A world more intimately wise,
Built of your dedicated days,
  And seen in your beholding eyes.

So, marvellous and far, the mind,
  That slept among them when began
Waters and hills, leaps up to find
  Its kingdom in the thought of man.

SUNRISE ON RYDAL WATER

(TO E. DE S.)

COME down at dawn from windless hills
Into the valley of the lake,
Where yet a larger quiet fills
The hour, and mist and water make
With rocks and reeds and island boughs
One silence and one element,
Where wonder goes surely as once
It went
By Galilean prows.

Moveless the water and the mist,
Moveless the secret air above,
Hushed, as upon some happy tryst
The poised expectancy of love;
What spirit is it that adores
What mighty presence yet unseen?
What consummation works apace
Between
These rapt enchanted shores?

Never did virgin beauty wake
Devouter to the bridal feast
Than moves this hour upon the lake
In adoration to the east;
Here is the bride a god may know,
The primal will, the young consent,

Till surely upon the appointed mood
Intent
The god shall leap — and, lo,

Over the lake's end strikes the sun,
White, flameless fire; some purity
Thrilling the mist, a splendour won
Out of the world's heart. Let there be
Thoughts, and atonements, and desires,
Proud limbs, and undeliberate tongue,
Where now we move with mortal oars
Among
Immortal dews and fires.

So the old mating goes apace,
Wind with the sea, and blood with thought,
Lover with lover; and the grace
Of understanding comes unsought
When stars into the twilight steer,
Or thrushes build among the may,
Or wonder moves between the hills,
And day
Comes up on Rydal mere.

SEPTEMBER

Wind and the robin's note to-day
Have heard of autumn and betray
  The green long reign of summer.
The rust is falling in the leaves,
September stands beside the sheaves,
  The new, the happy comer.

Not sad my season of the red
And russet orchards gaily spread
  From Cholesbury to Cooming,
Nor sad when twilit valley trees
Are ships becalmed on misty seas,
  And beetles go abooming.

Now soon shall come the morning crowds
Of starlings, soon the coloured clouds
  From oak and ash and willow,
And soon the thorn and briar shall be
Rich in their crimson livery,
  In scarlet and in yellow.

Spring laughed and thrilled a million veins,
And summer shone above her rains
  To fill September's faring;
September talks as kings who know
The world's way and superbly go
  In robes of wisdom's wearing.

OLTON POOLS

(TO G. C. G.)

Now June walks on the waters,
And the cuckoo's last enchantment
Passes from Olton pools.

Now dawn comes to my window
Breathing midsummer roses,
And scythes are wet with dew.

Is it not strange for ever
That, bowered in this wonder,
Man keeps a jealous heart? . . .

That June and the June waters,
And birds and dawn-lit roses,
Are gospels in the wind,

Fading upon the deserts,
Poor pilgrim revelations? . . .
Hist . . . over Olton pools!

OF GREATHAM

(TO THOSE WHO LIVE THERE)

For peace, than knowledge more desirable,
Into your Sussex quietness I came,
When summer's green and gold and azure fell
Over the world in flame.

And peace upon your pasture-lands I found,
Where grazing flocks drift on continually,
As little clouds that travel with no sound
Across a windless sky.

Out of your oaks the birds call to their mates
That brood among the pines, where hidden deep
From curious eyes a world's adventure waits
In columned choirs of sleep.

Under the calm ascension of the night
We heard the mellow lapsing and return
Of night-owls purring in their groundling flight
Through lanes of darkling fern.

Unbroken peace when all the stars were drawn
Back to their lairs of light, and ranked along
From shire to shire the downs out of the dawn
Were risen in golden song.

. . . . . .

I sing of peace who have known the large
unrest
Of men bewildered in their travelling,
And I have known the bridal earth unblest
By the brigades of spring.

I have known that loss. And now the broken
thought
Of nations marketing in death I know,
The very winds to threnodies are wrought
That on your downlands blow.

I sing of peace. Was it but yesterday
I came among your roses and your corn?
Then momently amid this wrath I pray
For yesterday reborn.

MAMBLE

I NEVER went to Mamble
That lies above the Teme,
So I wonder who 's in Mamble,
And whether people seem
Who breed and brew along there
As lazy as the name,
And whether any song there
Sets alehouse wits aflame.

The finger-post says Mamble,
And that is all I know
Of the narrow road to Mamble,
And should I turn and go
To that place of lazy token
That lies above the Teme,
There might be a Mamble broken
That was lissom in a dream.

So leave the road to Mamble
And take another road
To as good a place as Mamble
Be it lazy as a toad;
Who travels Worcester county
Takes any place that comes
When April tosses bounty
To the cherries and the plums.

OUT OF THE MOON

Merely the moonlight
Piercing the boughs of my may-tree,
Falling upon my ferns;
Only the night
Touching my ferns with silver bloom
Of sea-flowers here in the sleeping city —
And suddenly the imagination burns
With knowledge of many a dark significant
doom
Out of antiquity,
Sung to hushed halls by troubadours
Who knew the ways of the heart because they
had seen
The moonlight washing the garden's deeper
green
To silver flowers,
Falling with tidings out of the moon, as now
It falls on the ferns under my may-tree bough.

MOONLIT APPLES

At the top of the house the apples are laid in rows,
And the skylight lets the moonlight in, and those
Apples are deep-sea apples of green. There goes
A cloud on the moon in the autumn night.

A mouse in the wainscot scratches, and scratches, and then
There is no sound at the top of the house of men
Or mice; and the cloud is blown, and the moon again
Dapples the apples with deep-sea light.

They are lying in rows there, under the gloomy beams;
On the sagging floor; they gather the silver streams
Out of the moon, those moonlit apples of dreams,
And quiet is the steep stair under.

In the corridors under there is nothing but sleep.
And stiller than ever on orchard boughs they keep
Tryst with the moon, and deep is the silence, deep
On moon-washed apples of wonder.

COTTAGE SONG

Morning and night I bring
Clear water from the spring,
And through the lyric noon
I hear the larks in tune,
And when the shadows fall
There 's providence for all.

My garden is alight
With currants red and white;
And my blue curtains peep
On starry courses deep,
When down her silver tides
The moon on Cotswold rides.

My path of paven grey
Is thoroughfare all day
For fellowship, till time
Bids us with candles climb
The little whitewashed stair
Above my lavender.

Black in the summer night my Cotswold hill
Aslant my window sleeps, beneath a sky
Deep as the bedded violets that fill
March woods with dusky passion. As I lie
Abed between cool walls I watch the host
Of the slow stars lit over Gloucester plain,
And drowsily the habit of these most
Beloved of English lands moves in my brain,
While silence holds dominion of the dark,
Save when the foxes from the spinneys bark.

I see the valleys in their morning mist
Wreathed under limpid hills in moving light,
Happy with many a yeoman melodist:
I see the little roads of twinkling white
Busy with fieldward teams and market gear
Of rosy men, cloth-gaitered, who can tell
The many-minded changes of the year,
Who know why crops and kine fare ill or
well;
I see the sun persuade the mist away,
Till town and stead are shining to the day.

I see the wagons move along the rows
Of ripe and summer-breathing clover-flower,
I see the lissom husbandman who knows
Deep in his heart the beauty of his power,

As, lithely pitched, the full-heaped fork bids on
The harvest home. I hear the rickyard fill
With gossip as in generations gone,
While wagon follows wagon from the hill.
I think how, when our seasons all are sealed,
Shall come the unchanging harvest from the field.

I see the barns and comely manors planned
By men who somehow moved in comely
thought,
Who, with a simple shippon to their hand,
As men upon some godlike business wrought;
I see the little cottages that keep
Their beauty still where since Plantagenet
Have come the shepherds happily to sleep,
Finding the loaves and cups of cider set;
I see the twisted shepherds, brown and old,
Driving at dusk their glimmering sheep to fold.

And now the valleys that upon the sun
Broke from their opal veils, are veiled again,
And the last light upon the wolds is done,
And silence falls on flocks and fields and men;
And black upon the night I watch my hill,
And the stars shine, and there an owly wing
Brushes the night, and all again is still,
And, from this land of worship that I sing,
I turn to sleep, content that from my sires
I draw the blood of England's midmost shires.

OLD CROW

The bird in the corn
Is a marvellous crow.
He was laid and was born
In the season of snow;
And he chants his old catches
Like a ghost under hatches.

He comes from the shades
Of his wood very early,
And works in the blades
Of the wheat and the barley,
And he's happy, although
He's a grumbleton crow.

The larks have devices
For sunny delight,
And the sheep in their fleeces
Are woolly and white;
But these things are the scorn
Of the bird in the corn.

And morning goes by,
And still he is there,
Till a rose in the sky
Calls him back to his lair
In the boughs where the gloom
Is a part of his plume.

But the boy in the lane
  With his gun, by and by,
To the heart of the grain
  Will narrowly spy,
And the twilight will come,
And no crow will fly home.

VENUS IN ARDEN

Now Love, her mantle thrown,
Goes naked by,
Threading the woods alone,
Her royal eye
Happy because the primroses again
Break on the winter continence of men.

I saw her pass to-day
In Warwickshire,
With the old imperial way,
The old desire,
Fresh as among those other flowers they went
More beautiful for Adon's discontent.

Those other years she made
Her festival
When the blue eggs were laid
And lambs were tall,
By the Athenian rivers while the reeds
Made love melodious for the Ganymedes.

And now through Cantlow brakes,
By Wilmcote hill,
To Avon-side, she makes
Her garlands still,
And I who watch her flashing limbs am one
With youth whose days three thousand years
are done.

ON A LAKE

Sweet in the rushes
The reed-singers make
A music that hushes
The life of the lake;
The leaves are dumb,
And the tides are still,
And no calls come
From the flocks on the hill.

Forgotten now
Are nightingales,
And on his bough
The linnet fails, —
Midway the mere
My mirrored boat
Shall rest and hear
A slenderer note.

Though, heart, you measure
But one proud rhyme,
You build a treasure
Confounding time —
Sweet in the rushes
The reed-singers make
A music that hushes
The life of the lake.

"Hush!" was my whisper
At the stair-top
When the waggoners were down below
Home from the barley-crop.
Through the high window
Looked the harvest moon,
While the waggoners sang
A harvest tune, —
"Hush!" was my whisper when
Marjory stept
Down from her attic-room,
A true-love-adept.

"Fill a can, fill a can,"
Waggoners of heart were they,
"Harvest-home, harvest-home,
Barleycorn is home to-day." . . .
"Marjory, hush now —
Harvest — you hear?" —
Red was the moon's rose
On the full year,
The cobwebs shook, so well
Did the waggoners sing —
"Hush!" — there was beauty at
That harvesting.

AT AN EARTHWORKS

Ringed high with turf the arena lies,
  The neighbouring world unseen, unheard,
Here are but unhorizoned skies,
  And on the skies a passing bird,

The conies and a wandering sheep,
  The castings of the chambered mole, —
These, and the haunted years that keep
  Lost agonies of blood and soul.

They say that in the midnight moon
  The ghostly legions gather yet,
And hear a ghostly timbrel-tune,
  And see a ghostly combat met.

These are but yeoman's tales. And here
  No marvel on the midnight falls,
But starlight marvellously clear,
  Being girdled in these shadowy walls.

Yet now strange glooms of ancestry
  Creep on me through this morning light,
Some spectral self is seeking me . . .
  I will not parley with the night.

INSTRUCTION

I HAVE a place in a little garden,
That laurel-leaf and fern
Keep a cool place though fires of summer
All the green grasses burn.
Little cool winds creep there about
When winds all else are dead,
And tired limbs there find gentle keeping,
And humours of sloth are shed.

So do your songs come always to me,
Poets of age and age,
Clear and cool as rivers of wind
Threading my hermitage,
Stilling my mind from tribulation
Of life half-seen, half-heard,
With images made in the brain's quietness,
And the leaping of a word.

HABITATION

High up in the sky there, now, you know,
In this May twilight, our cottage is asleep,
Tenantless, and no creature there to go
Near it but Mrs. Fry's fat cows, and sheep
Dove-coloured, as is Cotswold. No one hears
Under that cherry-tree the night-jars yet,
The windows are uncurtained; on the stairs
Silence is but by tip-toe silence met.
All doors are fast there. It is a dwelling put by
From use for a little, or long, up there in the sky.

Empty; a walled-in silence, in this twilight of May —
A home for lovers, and friendly withdrawing, and sleep,
With none to love there, nor laugh, nor climb from the day
To the candles and linen. . . . Yet in the silence creep,
This minute, I know, little ghosts, little virtuous lives,
Breathing upon that still, insensible place,
Touching the latches, sorting the napkins and knives,
And such for the comfort of being, and bowls for the grace,

That roses will brim; they are creeping from
that room to this,
One room, and two, till the four are visited . . .
they,
Little ghosts, little lives, are our thoughts in
this twilight of May,
Signs that even the curious man would miss,
Of travelling lovers to Cotswold, signs of an
hour,
Very soon, when up from the valley in June
will ride
Lovers by Lynch to Oakridge up in the wide
Bow of the hill, to a garden of lavender
flower. . . .

The doors are locked; no foot falls; the hearths
are dumb —
But we are there — we are waiting ourselves
who come.

WRITTEN IN WINTERBORNE CAME CHURCH

(WILLIAM BARNES, 1801–1886)

To Mrs. Thomas Hardy

I DO not use to listen well
  At sermon time,
I'ld rather hear the plainest rhyme
  Than tales the parsons tell;

The homespun of experience
  They will not wear,
But walk a transcendental air
  In dusty rags of sense.

But humbly in your little church
  Alone I watch;
Old rector, lift again the latch,
  Here is a heart to search.

Come, with a simple word and wise
  Quicken my brain,
And while upon the painted pane
  The painted butterflies

Beat in the early April beams,
  You shall instruct
My spirit in the knowledge plucked
  From your still Dorset dreams.

Your word shall strive with no obscure
  Debated text,
Your vision being unperplexed,
  Your loving purpose pure.

I know you'll speak of April flowers,
  Or lambs in pen,
Or happy-hearted maids and men
  Weaving their April hours.

Or rising to your thought will come,
  For lessoning,
Those lovers of an older spring,
  That now in tombs are dumb.

And brooding in your theme shall be,
  Half said, half heard,
The presage of a poet's word
  To mock mortality.

. . . . . .

The years are on your grave the while,
  And yet, almost,
I think to see your surpliced ghost
  Stand hesitant in the aisle,

Find me sole congregation there,
  Assess my mood,
Know mine a kindred solitude,
  And climb the pulpit-stair.

BUDS

The raining hour is done,
And, threaded on the bough,
The May-buds in the sun
Are shining emeralds now.

As transitory these
As things of April will,
Yet, trembling in the trees,
Is briefer beauty still.

For, flowering from the sky
Upon an April day,
Are silver buds that lie
Amid the buds of May.

The April emeralds now,
While thrushes fill the lane,
Are linked along the bough
With silver buds of rain.

And, straightly though to earth
The buds of silver slip,
The green buds keep the mirth
Of that companionship.

BLACKBIRD

He comes on chosen evenings,
My blackbird bountiful, and sings
Over the gardens of the town
Just at the hour the sun goes down.
His flight across the chimneys thick,
By some divine arithmetic,
Comes to his customary stack,
And couches there his plumage black,
And there he lifts his yellow bill,
Kindled against the sunset, till
These suburbs are like Dymock woods
Where music has her solitudes,
And while he mocks the winter's wrong
Rapt on his pinnacle of song,
Figured above our garden plots
Those are celestial chimney-pots.

MAY GARDEN

A SHOWER of green gems on my apple-tree
  This first morning of May
Has fallen out of the night, to be
  Herald of holiday —
Bright gems of green that, fallen there,
Seem fixed and glowing on the air.

Until a flutter of blackbird wings
  Shakes and makes the boughs alive,
And the gems are now no frozen things,
  But apple-green buds to thrive
On sap of my May garden, how well
The green September globes will tell.

Also my pear-tree has its buds,
  But they are silver yellow,
Like autumn meadows when the floods
  Are silver under willow,
And here shall long and shapely pears
Be gathered while the autumn wears.

And there are sixty daffodils
  Beneath my wall. . . .
And jealousy it is that kills
  This world when all
The spring's behaviour here is spent
To make the world magnificent.

AT AN INN

We are talkative proud, and assured, and self-sufficient,
The quick of the earth this day;
This inn is ours, and its courtyard, and English history,
And the Post Office up the way.

The stars in their changes, and heavenly speculation,
The habits of birds and flowers,
And character bred of poverty and riches,
All these are ours.

The world is ours, and these its themes and its substance,
And of these we are free men and wise;
Among them all we move in possession and judgment,
For a day, till it dies.

But in eighteen-hundred-and-fifty, who were the tenants,
Sure and deliberate as we?
They knew us not in the time of their ascension,
Their self-sufficiency.

And in nineteen-hundred-and-fifty this inn
shall flourish,
And history still be told,
And the heat of blood shall thrive, and specu-
lation,
When we are cold.

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PERSPECTIVE

In the Wheatsheaf parlour I sat to see
The story of Chippington street go by,
The squire, and dames of little degree,
And drovers with cattle and flocks to cry.

And these were all as my creatures there,
Twinkling to and fro in the sun,
And placidly I had joy, had care,
Of all their labours and dealings done.

Into the parlour strode me then
Two fellows fiercely set at odds,
To whom the difference of men
Gave the sufficiency of God.

They saw me, and they stept beyond
To a chamber within earshot still,
And each on each of broken bond,
And honour, and inflexible will,

Railed. And loud the little inn grew,
But nothing I cared their quarrel to learn,
Though the issue tossing between the two
They deemed the bait of the world's concern.

Only I thought how most are men
Fantastic when they most are proud,
And out of my laughter I looked again
On the flowing figures of Chippington crowd.

CROCUSES

TO E. H. C.

Desires,
Little determined desires,
Gripped by the mould,
Moving so hardly among
The earth, of whose heart they were bred,
That is old; it is old,
Not gracious to little desires such as these,
But apter for work on the bases of trees,
Whose branches are hung
Overhead,
Very mightily, there overhead.

Through the summer they stirred,
They strove to the bulbs after May,
Until harvest and song of the bird
Went together away;
And ever till coming of snows
They worked in the mould, for undaunted were
those
Swift little determined desires, in the earth
Without sign, any day,
Ever shaping to marvels of birth,
Far away.

And we went
Without heed

On our way,
Never knowing what virtue was spent,
Day by day,
By those little desires that were gallant to
breed
Such beauty as fortitude may.
Not once in our mind
Was that corner of earth under trees,
Very mighty and tall,
As we travelled the roads and the seas,
And gathered the wage of our kind,
And were laggard or trim to the call
Of the duties that lengthen the hours
Into seasons that flourish and fall.

And blind,
In the womb of the flowers,
Unresting they wrought,
In the bulbs, in the depth of the year,
Buried far from our thought;
Till one day, when the thrushes were clear
In their note it was spring — and they know —
Unheeding we came into sight
Of that corner forgotten, and lo,
They had won through the meshes of mould,
And treasuries lay in the light,
Of ivory, purple, and gold.

RIDDLES, R.F.C.[1]

(1916)

He was a boy of April beauty; one
Who had not tried the world; who, while the sun
Flamed yet upon the eastern sky, was done.

Time would have brought him in her patient ways —
So his young beauty spoke — to prosperous days,
To fulness of authority and praise.

He would not wait so long. A boy, he spent
His boy's dear life for England. Be content:
No honour of age had been more excellent.

[1] Lieutenant Stewart G. Ridley, Royal Flying Corps, sacrificed his life in the Egyptian desert in an attempt to save a comrade. He was twenty years of age.

THE SHIPS OF GRIEF

On seas where every pilot fails
A thousand thousand ships to-day
Ride with a moaning in their sails,
Through winds grey and waters grey.

They are the ships of grief. They go
As fleets are derelict and driven,
Estranged from every port they know,
Scarce asking fortitude of heaven.

No, do not hail them. Let them ride
Lonely as they would lonely be . . .
There is an hour will prove the tide,
There is a sun will strike the sea.

NOCTURNE

O ROYAL night, under your stars that keep
  Their golden troops in charted motion set,
The living legions are renewed in sleep
  For bloodier battle yet.

O royal death, under your boundless sky
  Where unrecorded constellations throng,
Dispassionate those other legions lie,
  Invulnerably strong.

THE PATRIOT

Scarce is my life more dear to me,
Brief tutor of oblivion,
Than fields below the rookery
That comfortably looks upon
The little street of Piddington.

I never think of Avon's meadows,
Ryton woods or Rydal mere,
Or moon-tide moulding Cotswold shadows,
But I know that half the fear
Of death's indifference is here.

I love my land. No heart can know
The patriot's mystery, until
It aches as mine for woods ablow
In Gloucestershire with daffodil,
Or Bicester brakes that violets fill.

No man can tell what passion surges
For the house of his nativity
In the patriot's blood, until he purges
His grosser mood of jealousy,
And comes to meditate with me

Of gifts of earth that stamp his brain
As mine the pools of Ludlow mill,
The hazels fencing Trilly's Lane,

And Forty Acres under Brill,
The ferry under Elsfield hill.

These are what England is to me,
Not empire, nor the name of her
Ranging from pole to tropic sea.
These are the soil in which I bear
All that I have of character.

That men my fellows near and far
May live in like communion,
Is all I pray; all pastures are
The best beloved beneath the sun;
I have my own; I envy none.

EPILOGUE FOR A MASQUE

A LITTLE time they lived again, and lo!
Back to the quiet night the shadows go,
And the great folds of silence once again
Are over fools and kings and fighting-men.

A little while they went with stumbling feet,
With spears of hate, and love all flowery sweet,
With wondering hearts and bright adventurous
wills,
And now their dust is on a thousand hills.

We dream of them, as men unborn shall dream
Of us, who strive a little with the stream
Before we too go out beyond the day,
And are as much a memory as they.

And Death, so coming, shall not seem a thing
Of any fear, nor terrible his wing.
We too shall be a tale on earth, and time
Shall shape our pilgrimage into a rhyme.

THE GUEST

Sometimes I feel that death is very near,
And, with half-lifted hand,
Looks in my eyes, and tells me not to fear,
But walk his friendly land,
Comrade with him, and wise
As peace is wise.

Then, greatly though my heart with pity moves
For dear imperilled loves,
I somehow know
That death is friendly so,
A comfortable spirit; one who takes
Long thought for all our sakes.

I wonder; will he come that friendly way,
That guest, or roughly in the appointed day?
And will, when the last drops of life are spilt,
My soul be torn from me,
Or, like a ship truly and trimly built,
Slip quietly to sea?

TREASON

What time I write my roundelays,
I am as proud as princes gone,
Who built their empires in old days,
As Tamburlaine or Solomon;
And wisely though companions then
Say well it is and well I sing,
Assured above the praise of men
I am a solitary king.

But when I leave that straiter mood,
That lonely hour, and put aside
The continence of solitude,
I fall in treason to my pride,
And if a witling's word be spent
Upon my song in jealousy,
In anger and in argument
I am as derelict as he.

POLITICS

You say a thousand things,
Persuasively,
And with strange passion hotly I agree,
And praise your zest,
And then
A blackbird sings
On April lilac, or fieldfaring men,
Ghostlike, with loaded wain,
Come down the twilit lane
To rest,
And what is all your argument to me?

Oh, yes — I know, I know,
It must be so —
You must devise
Your myriad policies,
For we are little wise,
And must be led and marshalled, lest we keep
Too fast a sleep
Far from the central world's realities.
Yes, we must heed —
For surely you reveal
Life's very heart; surely with flaming zeal
You search our folly and our secret need;
And surely it is wrong
To count my blackbird's song,

My cones of lilac, and my wagon team,
More than a world of dream.

But still
A voice calls from the hill —
I must away —
I cannot hear your argument to-day.

FOR A GUEST ROOM

All words are said,
And may it fall
That, crowning these,
You here shall find
A friendly bed,
A sheltering wall,
Your body's ease,
A quiet mind.

May you forget
In happy sleep
The world that still
You hold as friend,
And may it yet
Be ours to keep
Your friendly will
To the world's end.

For he is blest
Who, fixed to shun
All evil, when
The worst is known,
Counts, east and west,
When life is done,
His debts to men
In love alone.

DAY

Dawn is up at my window, and in the May-tree
The finches gossip, and tits, and beautiful sparrows
With feathers bright and brown as September hazels.

The sunlight is here, filtered through rosy curtains,
Docile and disembodied, a ghost of sunlight,
A gentle light to greet the dreamer returning.

Part the curtains. I give you salutation
Day, clear day; let us be friendly fellows.
Come. . . . I hear the Liars about the city.

DREAMS

We have our dreams; not happiness.
Great cities are upon the hill
To lighten all our dream, and still
We have no cities to possess
But cities built of bitterness.

We see gay fellows top to toe,
And girls in rainbow beauty bright —
'T is but of silly dreams I write,
For up and down the streets we know,
The scavengers and harlots go.

Give me a dozen men whose theme
Is honesty, and we will set
On high the banner of dreams . . . and yet
Thousands will pass us in a stream,
Nor care a penny what we dream

RESPONSIBILITY

You ploughman at the gate,
  All that you are for me
Is of my mind create,
  And in my brain to be
A figure newly won
From the world's confusion.

And if you are of grace,
  That 's honesty for me,
And if of evil face,
  Recorded then shall be
Dishonour that I saw
Not beauty, but the flaw.

PROVOCATIONS

I AM no merry monger when
I see the slatterns of the town:
I hate to think of docile men
Whose angers all are driven down;
For sluts make joy a thing obscene,
And in contempt is nothing clean.

I like to see the ladies walk
With heels to set their chins atilt:
I like to hear the clergy talk
Of other clergy's people's guilt;
For happy is the amorous eye,
And indignation clears the sky.

TRIAL

Beauty of old and beauty yet to be,
Stripped of occasion, have security;
This hour it is searches the judgment through,
When masks of beauty walk with beauty too.

CHARGE TO THE PLAYERS

THE TROJAN WOMEN, BIRMINGHAM REPERTORY THEATRE, APRIL 1918

Shades, that our town-fellows have come
To hear rewake for Christendom
This cleansing of a Pagan wrong
In flowing tides of tragic song, —
You shadows that the living call
To walk again the Trojan wall, —
You lips and countenance renewed
Of an immortal fortitude, —
Know that, among the silent rows
Of these our daily town-fellows,
Watching the shades with these who bring
But mortal ears to this you sing,
There somewhere sits the Greek who made
This gift of song, himself a shade.

CHARACTER

If one should tell you that in such a spring
The hawthorn boughs into the blackbird's nest
Poured poison, or that once at harvesting
The ears were stony, from so manifest
Slander of proven faith in tree and corn
You would turn unheeding, knowing him forsworn.

Yet now, when one whose life has never known
Corruption, as you know: whose days have been
As daily tidings in your heart of lone
And gentle courage, suffers the word unclean
Of envious tongues, doubting you dare not cry —
"I have been this man's familiar, and you lie."

REALITY

It is strange how we travel the wide world over,
And see great churches and foreign streets,
And armies afoot and kings of wonder,
And deeds a-doing to fill the sheets
That grave historians will pen
To ferment the brains of simple men.

And all the time the heart remembers
The quiet habit of one far place,
The drawings and books, the turn of a passage,
The glance of a dear familiar face,
And there is the true cosmopolis,
While the thronging world a phantom is.

EPILOGUE

Come tell us, you that travel far
With brave or shabby merchandise,
Have you saluted any star
That goes uncourtiered in the skies?

Do you remember leaf or wing
Or brook the willows leant along,
Or any small familiar thing
That passed you as you went along?

Or does the trade that is your lust
Drive you as yoke-beasts driven apace,
Making the world a road of dust
From market-place to market-place?

You traffic in the grain, the wine,
In purple and in cloth of gold,
In treasure of the field and mine,
In fables of the poets told, —

But have you laughed the wine-cups dry
And on the loaves of plenty fed,
And walked, with all your banners high,
In gold and purple garmented?

And do you know the songs you sell
And cry them out along the way?

And is the profit that you tell
  After your travel day by day

Sinew and sap of life, or husk —
  Dead coffer-ware or kindled brain?
And do you gather in the dusk
  To make your heroes live again?

If the grey dust is over all,
  And stars and leaves and wings forgot,
And your blood holds no festival —
  Go out from us; we need you not.

But if you are immoderate men,
  Zealots of joy, the salt and sting
And savour of life upon you — then
  We call you to our counselling.

And we will hew the holy boughs
  To make us level rows of oars,
And we will set our shining prows
  For strange and unadventured shores.

Where the great tideways swiftliest run
  We will be stronger than the strong
And sack the cities of the sun
  And spend our booty in a song.

MOONRISE

WHERE are you going, you pretty riders? —
To the moon's rising, the rising of death's moon,
Where the waters move not, and birds are still and songless,
Soon, very soon.

Where are you faring to, you proud Hectors?
Through battle, out of battle, under the grass,
Dust behind your hoof-beats rises, and into dust,
Clouded, you pass.

I 'm a pretty rider, I 'm a proud Hector,
I as you a little am pretty and proud;
I with you am riding, riding to the moonrise,
So sing we loud —

"Out beyond the dust lies mystery of moonrise,
We go to chiller learning than is bred in the sun,
Hectors, and riders, and a simple singer,
Riding as one."

DEER

Shy in their herding dwell the fallow deer.
They are spirits of wild sense. Nobody near
Comes upon their pastures. There a life they
live,
Of sufficient beauty, phantom, fugitive,
Treading as in jungles free leopards do,
Printless as evelight, instant as dew.
The great kine are patient, and home-coming
sheep
Know our bidding. The fallow deer keep
Delicate and far their counsels wild,
Never to be folded reconciled
To the spoiling hand as the poor flocks are:
Lightfoot, and swift, and unfamiliar,
These you may not hinder, unconfined
Beautiful flocks of the mind.

TO ONE I LOVE

As I walked along the passage, in the night,
beyond the stairs,
In the dark,
I was afraid,
Suddenly,
As will happen you know, my dear, it will often
happen.
I knew the walls at my side,
Knew the drawings hanging there, the order of
their placing,
And the door where my bed lay beyond,
And the window on the landing —
There was even a little ray of moonlight
through it —
All was known, familiar, my comfortable
home;
And yet I was afraid,
Suddenly,
In the dark, like a child, of nothing,
Of vastness, of eternity, of the queer pains of
thought,
Such as used to trouble me when I heard,
When I was little, the people talk
On Sundays of "As it was in the Beginning,
Is Now, and Ever Shall Be. . . ."
I am thirty-six years old,
And folk are friendly to me,

And there are no ghosts that should have reason
to haunt me,
And I have tempted no magical happenings
By forsaking the clear noons of thought
For the wizardries that the credulous take
To be golden roads to revelation.
I knew all was simplicity there,
Without conspiracy, without antagonism,
And yet I was afraid,
Suddenly,
A child, in the dark, forlorn. . . .
And then, as suddenly,
I was aware of a profound, a miraculous under-
standing,
Knowledge that comes to a man
But once or twice, as a bird's note
In the still depth of the night
Striking upon the silence . . .
I stood at the door, and there
Was mellow candle-light,
And companionship, and comfort,
And I knew
That it was even so,
That it must be even so
With death.
I knew
That no harm could have touched me out of
my fear,
Because I had no grudge against anything,

Because I had desired
In the darkness, when fear came,
Love only, and pity, and fellowship,
And it would have been a thing monstrous,
Something defying nature
And all the simple universal fitness
For any force there to have come evilly
Upon me, who had no evil in my heart,
But only trust, and tenderness
For every presence about me in the air,
For the very shadow about me,
Being a little child for no one's envy.
And I knew that God
Must understand that we go
To death as little children,
Desiring love so simply, and love's defence,
And that he would be a barren God, without humour,
To cheat so little, so wistful, a desire,
That he created
In us, in our childishness . . .
And I may never again be sure of this,
But there, for a moment,
In the candle-light,
Standing at the door,
I knew.

TO ALICE MEYNELL

I too have known my mutinies,
  Played with improvident desires,
Gone indolently vain as these
  Whose lips from undistinguished choirs
  Mock at the music of our sires.

I too have erred in thought. In hours
  When needy life forbade me bring
To song the brain's unravished powers,
  Then had it been a temperate thing
  Loosely to pluck an easy string.

Yet thought has been, poor profligate,
  Sin's period. Through dear and long
Obedience I learn to hate
  Unhappy lethargies that wrong
  The larger loyalties of song.

And you upon your slender reed,
  Most exquisitely tuned, have made
For every singing heart a creed.
  And I have heard; and I have played
  My lonely music unafraid,

Knowing that still a friendly few,
  Turning aside from turbulence,
Cherish the difficult phrase, the due
  Bridals of disembodied sense
  With the new word's magnificence.

PETITION

O Lord, I pray: that for each happiness
My housemate brings I may give back no less
Than all my fertile will;

That I may take from friends but as the stream
Creates again the hawthorn bloom adream
Above the river sill;

That I may see the spurge upon the wall
And hear the nesting birds give call to call,
Keeping my wonder new;

That I may have a body fit to mate
With the green fields, and stars, and streams in spate,
And clean as clover-dew;

That I may have the courage to confute
All fools with silence when they will dispute,
All fools who will deride;

That I may know all strict and sinewy art
As that in man which is the counterpart,
Lord, of Thy fiercest pride;

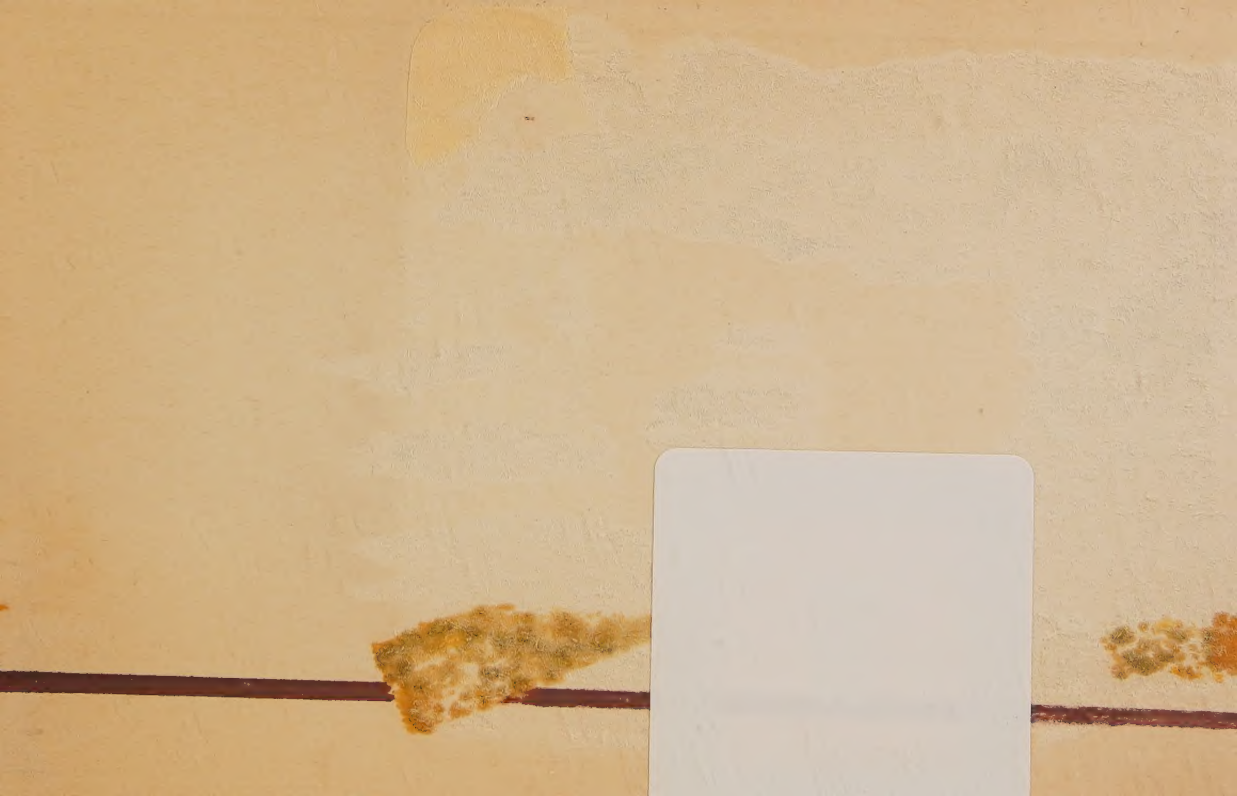
That somehow this beloved earth may wear
A later grace for all the love I bear,
For some song that I sing;

That, when I die, this word may stand for
me —
He had a heart to praise, an eye to see,
And beauty was his king.

HARVESTING

Pale sheaves of oats, pocked by untimely rain,
Under October skies,
Teased and forlorn,
Ungathered lie where still the tardy wain
Comes not to seal
The seasons of the corn,
From prime to June, with running barns of grain.

Now time with me is at the middle year,
The register of youth
Is now to sing . . .
My thoughts are ripe, my moods are in full ear;
That they should fail
Of harvesting,
Uncarried on cold fields, is all my fear.



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